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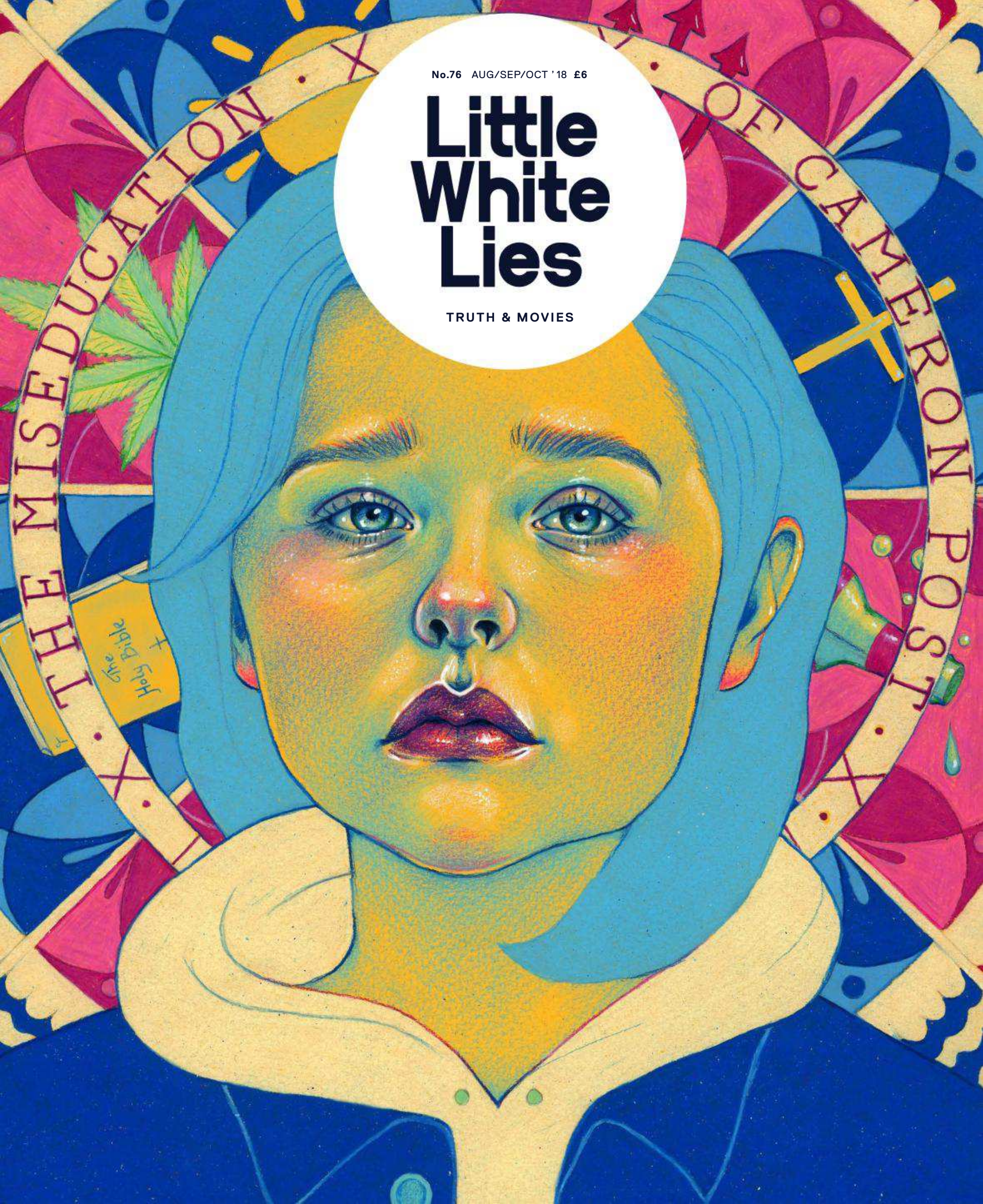
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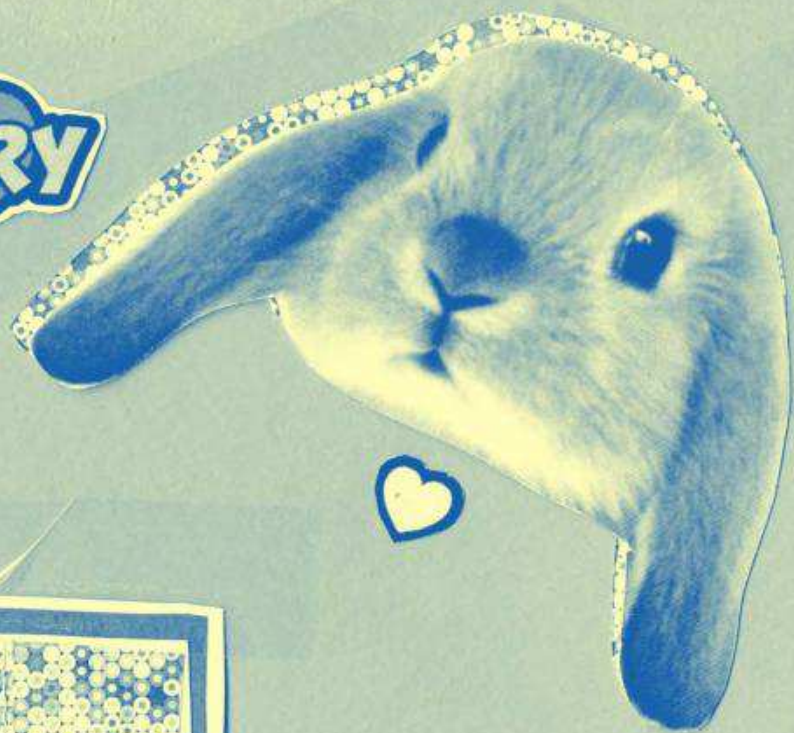




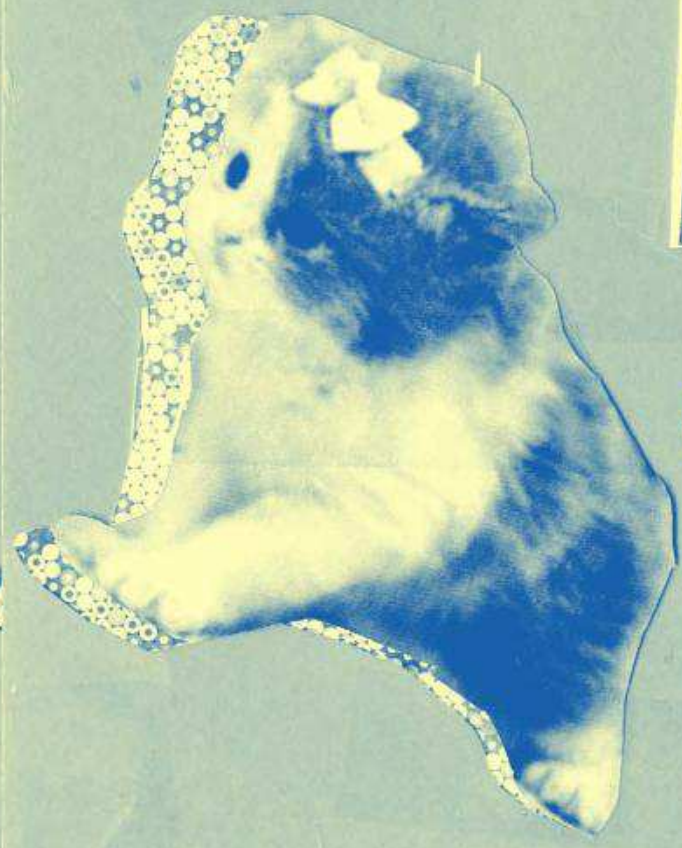
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AWESOME!



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Directed by **DESIREE AKHAVAN**
Starring **CHLOË GRACE MORETZ, SASHA LANE, FORREST GOODLUCK**
Released **7 SEPTEMBER**



Desiree Akhavan skewers the inhumane practice of conversion therapy with great heart and humour in this sparkling '90s-set coming-of-ager.

Who ever warns you how much being a teenage girl hurts. The glossy pages of girly magazines explain how to navigate exams, fashion faux pas – even the experience of being coerced into smoking your first cigarette or necking a can of cheap beer at a house party. But what of the acute agony of trying to exist in a world that denies the validity of your existence at every turn? How do you safeguard against that? How do you explain that the world will eat you alive given half a chance, and all we have as a defence are the families we find for ourselves? There's no easy answer, but cinema seems like a continuously safe bet, capable of capturing the anxiety of adolescence in a more tangible way than perhaps any other medium.

In her 2015 debut feature, *Appropriate Behaviour*, writer/director Desiree Akhavan mined her personal experiences to create a bold, brash chronicle of modern womanhood in Brooklyn, New York. Her follow-up feels decidedly quieter – and not just because it plays out against the relative calm of rural Montana. Based on the 2012 Young Adult novel of the same name by Emily M Danforth, *The Miseducation of Cameron Post* tells of a 17-year-old girl who is sent to a Christian conversion therapy camp after being caught in a compromising situation with another girl on the night of her school's Homecoming ball. Though the film is set in 1993, the subject matter couldn't be more timely given the ongoing battle for LGBT rights happening in the US and elsewhere. Conversion therapy isn't some new bogeyman – this inhumane practice has been used to subjugate young gay people for decades.

Chloë Grace Moretz is Cameron Post, a state track and field champion who is sent to 'God's Promise' by her pious aunt (Kerry Butler). Still best known for her breakout role as the 13-year-old who said "cunt" in *Kick-Ass*, there's always been a sense with Moretz that she just needed the right role to truly shine. She has certainly found it here – Moretz gives a deeply vulnerable but exceptionally mature performance as a teenage girl struggling to come to terms with who she really is. In one scene, Cameron comes undone as she realises the hopelessness of her situation, and as she begins to cry, her whole body starts to shake. Moretz captures what it is to be young and act much older for the sake of self-preservation.

“This is not a film that deals in binaries, but rather the grey area in between.”

Sasha Lane and Forrest Goodluck are similarly remarkable as Cameron's fellow “disciples” Jane Fonda and Adam Red Eagle, who struggle with their own circumstances and try to make the best out of their dire situation. Humour has its part to play too – Akhavan points out the ludicrousness of evangelical Christianity, but also touches on the minutiae of teenage relationships. Yet so much of Cameron's friendship with Jane and Adam is built on what's not said rather than what is – on glances shared across the room. It's this quietness that enables the film's louder moments to really sing: when Cameron jumps onto a table to belt out 4 Non Blondes' seminal song of frustration ‘What's Up?’, it's a moment of genuine freedom that will make your heart soar. Temporary release by way of Linda Perry.

Touches of '90s nostalgia raise a smile but never feel campy or over-the-top. Flannel shirts, a Clinton/Gore bumper sticker, Cameron attempting to swipe a Breeders cassette – these details place the film in a specific period, but they don't date it. Akhavan paints a vivid portrait of life as a gay person in a post-Stonewall world, before LGBT rights came into their own and the internet provided found families for queer people everywhere.

In flashback we see glimpses of Cameron's former life and her ill-fated relationship with Coley (Quinn Shephard). There's a beautiful tenderness to these scenes, and Akhavan plays with memory by intercutting them with footage from the present, showing Cameron beginning to question her own experience in light of the Christian rhetoric she's exposed to. It's hard to think of another director who would have approached the material with such affection, candour and restraint. Ashley Connor's cinematography adds to the film's dream-like aesthetic, lending the characters' lush surroundings a limitless quality – an open, idyllic prison.

At God's Promise, sibling team Reverend Rick (John Gallagher Jr) and Dr Lydia (Jennifer Ehle) council their young wards. Rick, who admits

he used to struggle with same-sex attraction, is the quintessential youth pastor of pop culture folklore – floppy-haired and cute as a labrador, always with a guitar in-hand ready for some ad hoc worshipping. He seems harmless enough, the sort of guy with whom conversion camps like to associate their mission. Lydia, by contrast, is calculating and stern, “a Disney villain who won't let you jerk off,” as Adam puts it. But there's something more to Rick than meets the eye. The tragedy of his character is how sincerely he believes he is doing the right thing, that sexuality is a simple control issue. The devastating nature of conversion therapy (“programming people to hate themselves”, as Cameron puts it) is unequivocal, but Akhavan succeeds in large part due to the empathy she extends to each and every character. This is not a film that deals in binaries, but rather the grey area in between.

While *The Miseducation of Cameron Post* is an important LGBT film, it also feels like a landmark addition to the coming-of-age canon. At one point Cameron, beginning to wonder if Lydia and Rick might have a point, admits to Jane, “I'm tired of feeling disgusted with myself.” Jane bites back, “Maybe you're supposed to feel disgusted when you're a teenager.” That's the deep cut at the heart of Akhavan's film – being young and in pain shouldn't automatically be accepted as part of growing up. Akhavan emphatically rejects this fallacy, instead showing that strength comes from admitting who you are, and figuring out how to move forward from there. **HANNAH WOODHEAD**

4

ANTICIPATION. *Loved* Appropriate Behaviour, *hoping for more of the same.*

4

ENJOYMENT. *Funny, fragile and quietly fierce, with an excellent lead turn from Chloë Grace Moretz.*

5



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12-16

Do You Love Me Now?

Writer/director Desiree Akhavan tells Simran Hans about the personal journey that led her to *The Miseducation of Cameron Post*.

19-22

Chloë Grace Moretz ♥ Sasha Lane

Is on-set friendship the secret to on-screen chemistry? The *Cameron Post* stars offer their personal take.

24-26

Pink and Plastic

Filmmaker Jamie Babbit reflects on the making of her seminal lesbian rom-com *But I'm a Cheerleader* to Justine Smith.

28-40

Light Enterprise

Six supremely talented female cinematographers discuss the past, present and future of their craft.

42-43

Threads #7

In her regular fashion in film column, Christina Newland surveys the stonewash denim craze of the '80s and '90s.



Do You Love Me now?

Industrious multi-hyphenate Desiree Akhavan opens up about her unconventional coming-of-age movie, *The Miseducation of Cameron Post*, her early encounters with pornography and the difficulties of writing a memoir.

Desiree Akhavan has a gift for mining her own experiences. From her cult web series *The Slope*, about “a pair of homophobic lesbians”, to her semi-autobiographical debut feature, *Appropriate Behaviour*, to *The Bisexual*, the London-set TV show she’s currently developing with Channel 4, and her soon-to-be published memoir ‘Late Bloomer’, the writer, director and actor is raunchy, candid and frequently hilarious.

The deftness with which Akhavan uses comedy to process past humiliation is a feature of her work, not a millennial bug. Her second feature, *The Miseducation of Cameron Post*, swaps the self-selecting circles of her native New York City for the less progressive plains of a conservative community in rural Montana circa 1993. An adaptation of Emily M Danforth’s 2012 Young Adult novel, the film tells of a young woman named Cameron (Chloë Grace Moretz) who is sent to a Christian conversion therapy camp for teens ‘suffering’ from same-sex attraction.

Akhavan finds black humour in outdated notions of what it means to be gay, likening a controlling camp warden to “a Disney villain who won’t let you jerk off”. Yet the film is also a confrontational look at internalised homophobia, as well as the more standard-issue affliction of teenage self-loathing.

LW Lies: Why did you decide to adapt ‘*The Miseducation of Cameron Post*’ into a film? Akhavan: I read the novel in 2012 and loved it. I wrote a fan letter to the writer, Emily, saying, ‘I love, love, love your book!’ and she wrote back like, ‘Oh, I know your web series, I like it a lot.’ At the time I wasn’t in a position to option it, but I always said that it would be a great second or third film. It felt really ambitious to me. I needed a budget and it needed someone who knew what they were doing. After *Appropriate Behaviour* I didn’t think it would be the right next film. To me, it wasn’t edgy enough, or sexy enough, or funny enough.

It’s interesting to hear you single out those qualities as lacking in the source material, because those things are very present in the film. When we pitched it to financiers, I got an email back saying, ‘This isn’t edgy enough. It’s too “Young Adult”. It’s not adult enough.’ My vision for it was the final product, which I do think is quite adult, and very sexy, and doesn’t pussyfoot around. I was nervous that I’d make a shitty version of this film, and you can see there’s a shitty version that exists in the script. Keep in mind that when we optioned the book, it felt like an out-of-date problem. I knew these places existed, but it just seemed like a really great metaphor for how any teenager – gay or straight – feels. Like there’s something wrong with them and they want to get better. My writing and



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producing partner Cecilia [Frugiuele] read the book and told me that it was our next film, and I trust her more than I trust myself so I said okay. I loved it but I didn't really have faith, not in the source material, but in myself.

I believe that's called Imposter Syndrome. Yeah, but I think it's also the one thing that drives me. I feel a really strong need to prove myself constantly, like I have so much to prove. It doesn't just come from insecurity, it comes from feeling like my voice wasn't heard, or that I wasn't being taken seriously. I have a lot to say, and for so much of my life, the first 30 years of it, I felt invisible. One hundred per cent invisible.

What was it like adapting somebody else's work? It was hard. It was surprisingly hard. When we wrote our first draft, it was really loyal to the book. That whole year of writing was finding what we hold on to and what we let go of, and I think that journey was about making it more personal.

How did you come up with the evocative musical cues? 4 Non Blondes was always scripted. It's a song by a gay group of women that reflects the situation they were in. It's rebellious, sexy, fun and indicative of its time. The Breeders' guitarist Josephine Wiggs did the music for *Appropriate Behaviour*; I always wanted them to be a big deal for Cameron. When it came to Celine Dion... It's funny, when it comes to karaoke, it's like, 'What are my options?' We wanted Amy Grant's 'Baby Baby', but she's a Christian singer so her people didn't want to license it to a film that's critical of the faith. I wanted a Top 40 singer and I wanted a ballad, something that was as sweet as Helen, who sings it.

What was it about Chloë that convinced you she would be a good fit? I never thought Chloë would want to make a film like this. When I heard she was interested I immediately thought, 'Fuck yeah'. I knew she was a really gifted actor, and I thought that if I meet her and get this sense that she has swagger, I'll be comfortable. I think a lot of people were very nervous about how passable she'd be, but you can't judge a person based on their persona.

Did you have any hesitation about casting a straight actor in a queer role? No, and first off, Chloë is 21, she's too young for me to be investigating her sexual past. She's never come out as straight, and that's not my business. Most of the cast are teenagers, it's not for me to ask them who they've fucked and what their experiences are. My business is to make a believable sex scene, and I'm really proud of those sex scenes. As a person who knows lesbian sex, I buy those scenes. It's important to me that the politics of my work are aligned to the politics of the film, and that my crew and cast are diverse, and that I represent as many as I can. Going up to teenagers and asking them what their sexuality is – that wasn't a priority for me. Kids under 30 are up to all kinds of shit.

How did you approach the sex scenes? When I fall in love with someone my conversations are always me quizzing them, and hopefully them quizzing me. I'm curious to know: What was the sex like with that person? Was it different to the way we do it? For this film, I choreographed all the sex scenes, and I hope they communicate something. It was really exciting. It felt like being able to direct for the first time.

Because you weren't directing yourself? Yeah. One of the most exciting moments on set was when we shot Chloë in the back of the car. The whole crew had set up around the car and they were like, 'Go for it'. I got to set and was like, 'No! I don't want to be five feet away from her like a fucking perv with binoculars'. I told them to put us all in the school, which was 300



yards away, everyone except Chloë, Quinn [Shephard] and the cinematographer. I remember being with my assistant, my producer and Cecilia, and we were all just staring at the monitor. I had never had that experience of, 'Oh my god, we're getting it!' If Chloë hadn't delivered I would've had to re-evaluate, but she fucking brought it. So did Quinn, but Chloë has to cum, or be the one receiving, which is a little more of a challenge.



There's both comedy and pathos in the way same-sex attraction is presented as a kind of disease. It's an interesting way of exploring internalised homophobia.

Have you ever personally experienced that? Of course. Who hasn't? I'd just be really impressed if you showed me someone who wasn't brainwashed to hate themselves for some reason or another, unless they're a sociopath. The process of growing up is hating yourself. For me the process of my twenties was trying to shed that. I'd feel shitty for all kinds of reasons – I'd hate to say it was just being gay...

Like what? What else? When I was in my mid-twenties I went to a rehabilitation centre for eating disorders. I always wanted to make a film about what rehab is like, but I didn't want it to be literal. The only film I've actually liked that depicts bulimia is *Life is Sweet* by Mike Leigh. It's really good. Anorexia – there's nothing. Maybe *Superstar*, the Todd Haynes film about Karen Carpenter. *Cameron Post* became this thesis statement of, 'What if you couldn't get better?' If you were all chasing better, and you were all there trying your hardest, and it turns out your ailment was something as integrated and as part of you as your skin. The kids can't trust the adults around them. It was like rehab meets a John Hughes film, because to me his films are all about that time in your life when you realise that adults don't have the answers, that they're all just as lost as you are.

There's a great scene where Cameron and Quinn Shephard's character, Coley, are watching *Desert Hearts*. Coley says to her, "You know what's gonna happen", but she's very coy about it. What films did you watch as a teenager that served as a sexual awakening, or you used as a move?

I had no moves. I was such a virgin. I didn't go on dates. I didn't have any gay films growing up. I loved *Trainspotting* – my brother would close my eyes during the sex scenes. I watched porn. My brother had porn and I snuck it.

This was before internet porn? Yeah, these were magazines. There were chapters in VC Andrews novels which were very soap opera-esque. For some reason they all revolved around incest, which is not my sex of choice. I was much more into reading things than seeing things.

It sounds like your producing partner, Cecilia, is your work wife. How did you come to be such close friends and colleagues? I see her as my life partner, and I can't say that about anyone else in the world. When I was 20 I did a year abroad in London and we met on the first day of school. We were in a French New Wave class, and I thought, 'This girl is irritatingly perfect'. She knew everything about Italian neorealism, about [Jean-Luc] Godard, [François] Truffaut. She was highly intelligent but really shy and very, very pretty. All the boys liked her and I felt very jealous. I was very loud, very American, very brash – she was the exact opposite. We started hanging out and realised we had the same taste in everything. Every single night we would go to Camden and eat noodles and watch *Never Been Kissed* on repeat, or the UK version of *The Office*.

You've lived in London now for three-and-a-half years. What drew you to this city? I have no fucking clue. It's funny because, intellectually, I don't think that I'd choose England or London. Greece or France – those are sexy places. Cecilia being here was the driving factor.



Janet Jackson's
hippie

Permanent hint
of a moustache due
to Iranian heritage

Early
exposure
to BAYWATCH

The rise
and fall of
"Bennifer"
(de-glamorized
heterosexuality)

Resemblance
to Freddie
Mercury

Smith
College.

Name: Devree Akhavan





CHLOË GRACE MORETZ

AS TOLD TO ADAM WOODWARD

The young co-stars reflect on forming an instant and lasting connection on the set of *The Miseducation of Cameron Post*.

On their first meeting

Sasha Lane: Desiree brought me, Chloë and Forrest [Goodluck] together about a week before we started filming. I remember we were sitting at the table with Desiree and Forrest and they were super chipper and excited, and me and Chloë were just so hungry. We couldn't talk, we just wanted food. So we had our food, and bam! We clicked right there and then. From that moment on we were just homies.

Chloë Grace Moretz: The first time we met we had just gotten to New York to start our rehearsal process. We read part of the script and then we went to dinner and hung out. After that we ended up spending every waking minute together, pretty much. She's now one of my closest and dearest friends and I love her like a sister. I truly do love that girl.

On becoming friends

SL: I feel like the chemistry we have on-screen is really down to our friendship in real life. It helped a lot because we were already on this road with our friendship so we just kept going down that same road. We lived in the camp where we were filming, which is this German resort in upstate New York that stands in for God's Promise in the film. We were in the middle of the woods so we would have campfires – it was pretty cold so, you know, what are you supposed to do but sit around a fire and talk about life?

CGM: We shot the movie over 23 days and it was quite an intimate thing because we all were living at the camp together. Naturally we spent a lot of time together, so it kind of became the reality of our daily lives while we were filming. We shot pretty much chronologically too, and that really

helped because the growth of our friendship in the movie is the growth of our friendship in real life.

SL: We actually have a lot in common. Chloë is a Southern girl like me, so there are certain things that we just understand about each other, and we like the same kinds of food and that kind of thing. She's also a very spiritual person and she's a great person to go to for advice.

CGM: One of the things that we first hit it off over is the fact that we're both originally from the South. We have the same sentiments about the way we grew up and the way we carry ourselves. And we've both had to fight to figure out who we are and to get our voices heard – more than anything else I think we really connected on that point. It was really wonderful working with her because she never saw 'Chloë Grace Moretz' the actress who's been working for 15 years, she just saw Chloë. She just saw me, and she listened to who I was and I listened to who she was. There was never one ounce of strangeness, no competitive feeling – which you get a lot in the industry – she just welcomed me with open arms.

SL: It's easy to be natural around each other and feed off of each other's energy. She knows how I act and I know how she acts. We did a fair amount of takes but what was cool was they were always different – we would play around with different ideas and try things in different ways. Especially with Jane, we talked a lot about how she presented herself, what she might say in a particular situation, what the perfect tone for a specific response would be. It was never super loose but it was always very relaxed and natural.

On learning from each other

SL: She knows so much about what she's doing and I don't think I'm very good at acting – I have my own way of getting into a role and connecting with a story but I'm terrible at the practical stuff, like knowing where to stand. I watched Chloë a lot and picked up on so many things, and she really is one of those people you can just watch and pick up on the technical stuff that I'm still learning. In this film, I think she really allowed herself to be vulnerable. There's this extra spark in her, I think. As a fellow actor it was really a thrill to see her push herself to that place.

CGM: Sasha is a fairy – she's a breath of fresh air. You just want to hug her and hold her and... she's just a beautiful human being. She teaches you to live life in the moment, to make the most of every second and minute that comes towards you and to not overthink things and to just jump in wholeheartedly. I'm someone who second-guesses myself a lot, and the thing she taught me which is so, so important is that you have to go on your feelings sometimes. Making this film with her, I think she really reinvigorated something in me. I've been acting since I was five years old – I know so much about this industry and about what it's like being on set and the entire process of it, so it was really interesting being with someone who was coming to it relatively fresh. This was only her second movie ever, and her energy and her vivacious attitude towards everything and her very raw, organic approach to acting was really exciting to see and to feed off. And it was just so perfect for her character in the movie.


SL: My character definitely has a harder edge, and that really comes from understanding that they're in a shitty situation but there's no use sulking about it – you've got to keep some spirit and have faith that you'll figure things out eventually. So it's about stepping up and being the one that keeps the smiles on everyone. I

really related to my character because I'm that way with my own family. So I always had a sense of what Desiree was going for.

On reading the script

CGM: I had taken about a year break from acting because I was fairly unhappy with a project I was attached to. I felt like I could do better, and I wanted to give myself the best opportunity to reach my full potential. The first script that I connected with was this one. Not only was it just a great script but it also would allow me to speak of the realities of conversion therapy, which is a very real issue in America. It's a message which is important to me and very close to home – having two gay brothers – but also I knew it would challenge me. I saw it as a chance to strip away the entire shape and idea of who everyone thought Chloë Grace Moretz was. This movie really restored the first love of my life, which is acting.

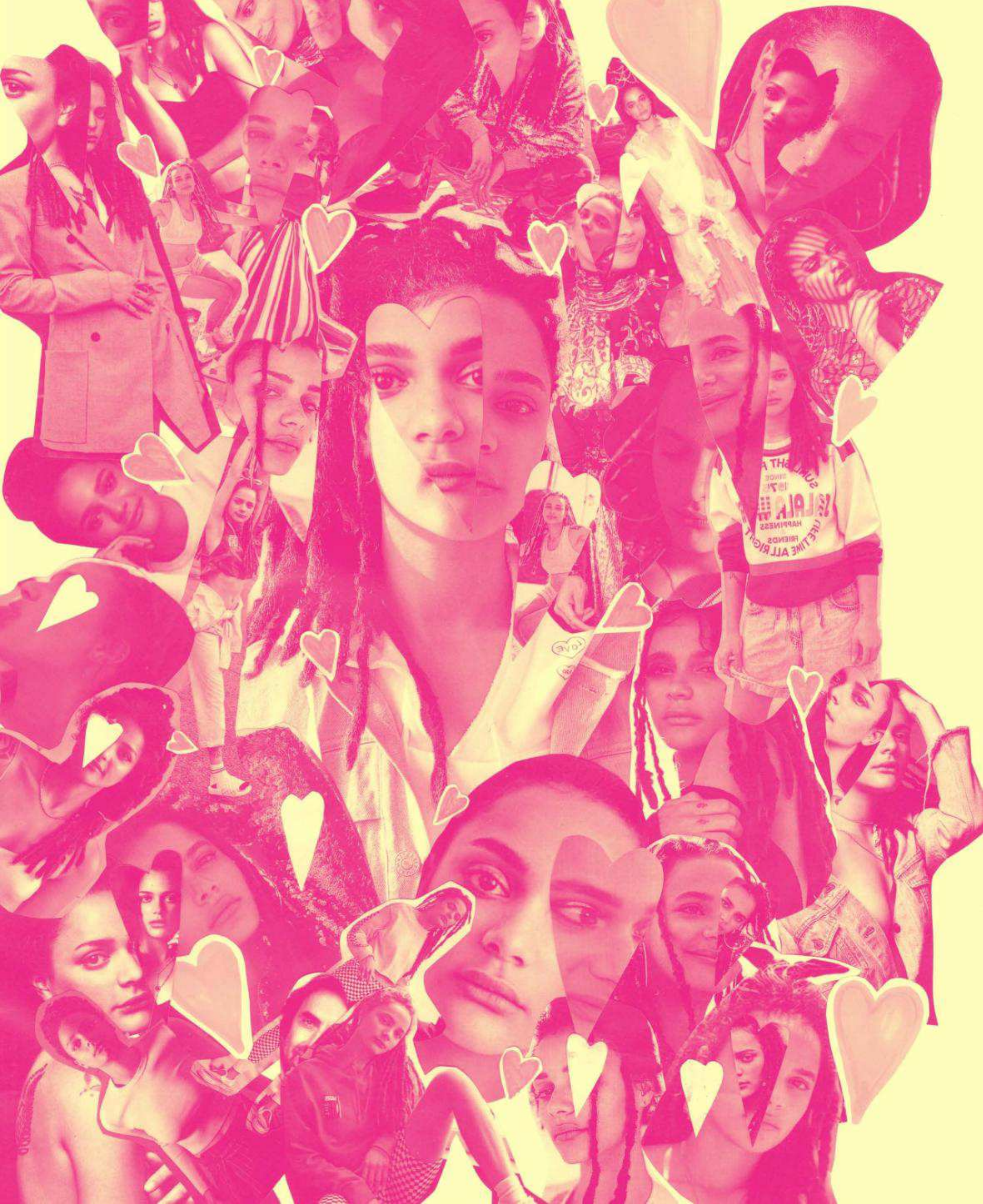
SL: When I first read the script I was like, 'What the fuck?!' Because I really didn't know anything about conversion therapy and these places which still exist today. Being a person who has a lot of empathy, it really interested me. From the moment I met Desiree, which was the same evening I finished reading the script, I knew it was something I had to be a part of.

CGM: I was aware of conversion therapy beforehand, but I wasn't aware that it's such a modern issue. I didn't know that it was actively legal in America, and now it's especially real in the sense that our current administration wholeheartedly believes in and advocates conversion therapy. We went and met survivors of conversion therapy, and the biggest thing that I was really surprised by is that none of these survivors were more than three or four years out of conversion therapy and none of them were over 30. That was very harrowing for us, to see the modernity of the issue. That really lit a fire under us and gave us an even stronger incentive to make the movie 



SASHA

LANE



What do you think of when you see this?

- a. A Flower possessing a fruitful stamen
- b. Thick succulent Cucumis stavius
- c. A platter of shrimps



Answer: a. You are gay - b. You are gay - c. You are gay

FEELING GAY : (? GET HELP NOW - Call 1 (202) 555 1212

PINK





WORDS & INTERVIEW BY JUSTINE SMITH
COLLAGE BY LAURÈNE BOGLIO

The story of late-'90s queer classic *But I'm a Cheerleader*,
as told by its writer/director Jamie Babbit.

The colour pink and the aesthetic of shiny plastic are two of the main ingredients in Jamie Babbit's cult lesbian classic, *But I'm a Cheerleader*, from 1999. It stars Natasha Lyonne as the blonde and bubbly Megan who is sent away to gay rehab at True Directions because her parents and friends suspect she might not be the conservative, white-bread conformist they want her to be. Initially unsure of her sexuality, Megan meets another camper, Clea DuVall's Graham, and the pair gradually fall in love. Inspired by Barbie, John Waters and *Edward Scissorhands*, this campy and carnal vision of queer love has an awesome satiric kick which still resonates today.

LW Lies: *But I'm a Cheerleader* was your first feature as a director. Did you feel a lot of pressure to succeed? Babbit: For any filmmaker, your first film means a lot. I struggled for a long time making short films to find financing for a feature. I made a short [in 1999] called *Sleeping Beauties* that had Clea DuVall in it. It was kind of a fairy tale retelling of unrequited lesbian love. It went to Sundance and I knew that I had a very short window to raise the money for *But I'm a Cheerleader*. I not only had to finish my short, but I also had to get the screenplay in order so that I could try to hustle funds for the feature. I ended up convincing a financier at Sundance to give me the money, just because he liked the short. I said, 'You want to get into the film business, at Sundance next year we can have a movie.'

So when did you start pre-production? Right after that. I had originally told him I could make the movie for \$500,000 because that felt like a reasonable amount of money that a banker could

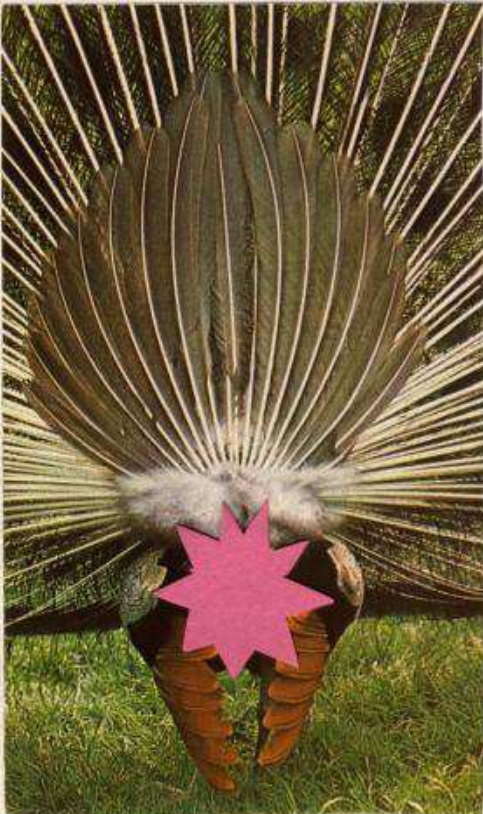
have. He said, 'That's a really low number, I love that!' Then we started casting. Once I had Cathy Moriarty, RuPaul and Natasha [Lyonne], they required trailers and actor provisions, which we didn't have the budget for. I had to go back and be like, 'I need a million dollars.' He said okay, but it delayed the process. But we ended up going into production during Sundance the next year.

How much of your own experience went into shaping the film? I grew up in Cleveland, Ohio. I had just moved to Los Angeles when I made *But I'm a Cheerleader* and I think it has more of an outsider's POV. I had grown up in a rehab – my mom ran a drug and alcohol rehab for teenagers called New Directions. I know an awful lot about teenagers living in a house in the countryside trying to get rid of a monkey on their back. I wanted to make a movie about what it was like to be a young lesbian because I hadn't seen a lot of representations of that. In 2000 there were just a lot of sad movies about people committing suicide.

What inspired the film's unique aesthetic? At the time I made *Sleeping Beauties*, I was experimenting with the kind of campy colours that I liked. I had taken my production designer Patti [Podesta] to a Toys "R" Us. I wanted to do a movie about the intersection between what people say being feminine and being a girl is, and being a lesbian. I was really into riot grrrl punk music, but was also a girly girl. I was wrestling with those two identities. I always played with Barbies when I was younger and had lots of

"I hadn't really seen lesbian movies that had happy endings. I wanted to make a hopeful love story – that was really important to me."

sexual adventures with them. To me, that was the beginning of my creativity. The whole idea of the ex-gay movement was: if you can take a butch woman and make her more feminine, then you can turn her straight. But what do you do with a girl who's a cheerleader, who is very feminine? How do you make that girl straight?



I really liked Tim Burton's *Edward Scissorhands*, and even though I had a limited budget, I wanted to explore this world where there is a really heavy design aesthetic. It made sense to me that *New Directions*, the gay rehab, would encompass this very stylised world where gay men would become more masculine and gay women would become more feminine and, therefore, straight.

Did making this a romantic comedy make it more difficult to sell? I always wanted to make the film as a comedy because it's such a heavy subject matter. I thought, 'I want to laugh otherwise I'm going to cry.' The whole ex-gay world was a perfect

playground for satire. I'm interested in comedy in my life and I tend to laugh at really sad, absurd things. I hadn't really seen lesbian movies that had happy endings. I wanted to make a hopeful love story – that was really important to me.

The film was initially rated NC-17 in the States, making it ineligible for mainstream distribution, but you made cuts to ensure it received an R rating. What was in the original cut? I had no idea that I was doing something that was pushing the boundaries. I was doing what was very natural to me. I thought it was a G movie! I always intended it as something young queers could laugh at and feel like they were reflected in. When I got the NC-17 phone call, I was shocked and angry. I had to call the woman in charge of my movie. She was like, 'We really like the movie but you have to cut a couple of things.' She said, 'The sex scene is so dark that we think that a lot of things are happening in the darkness. You need to lighten up the sex scene in the lab and send it again.' Now, what's

funny is the day we shot the sex scene, I was like, 'Guys, let's talk about nudity. What do you like about your bodies that I can show? I'm happy to hide things that you don't like.' They both said, 'We're not doing any nudity!' We're about to shoot a sex scene and it's going to look really stupid if they are fully dressed. And they're like, 'No, we're going to do a great job acting!' But people don't have sex fully clothed – it's ridiculous! So I turn to the cinematographer and say, 'We are going to shoot this super dark and you won't be able to tell that it just looks stupid.' I didn't have to change anything, because there was nothing happening in the sex scene. But I did end up changing one shot and looping a line where someone says, 'She had a sleepover with Graham', which was originally supposed to be, 'I hear you ate Graham out'. You can't have a reference to a girl going down on another girl. They also said I had to make the shot of Natasha masturbating shorter. Which was stupid – she's masturbating over her pyjamas! They told me it's not good for teenagers to see girls masturbating. I had to cut like two seconds off that.

Natasha Lyonne and Clea DuVall are amazing together on-screen. How did you cast them?

I met Natasha through Clea. She was like, 'I really think you should meet with Natasha, we have chemistry!' So I flew to New York and met with Natasha. At the time she was in her punk rock Lower East Side phase. Her hair was teased out and she was wearing a leather mini skirt, fishnet stockings and platform shoes. She really didn't dress up for the part. I'm having coffee with her and trying to convince her to do the movie, even though I'm worried she's not right for the part. I said, 'I cast Mink Sole and Bud Cort as the parents', and she's like, 'What?! I need to do this movie. Those are like my parents in my dreams!' So she signed on. First thing, I called Tamara Jenkins, who directed *The Slums of Beverly Hills*, and asked her, 'Can you give me advice on Natasha?' She said, 'She has a really hard time getting to set, so make it very easy for her in the morning.' I decided to put Natasha in a wig because her hair is really big and curly – it would take hours and hours to straighten. It was a big time saver and Jenkins was correct, it was hard to get Natasha to set. She was doing a lot of partying at the time. All the cast loved her, she's very charismatic. They were so excited to party with her every night 🍷

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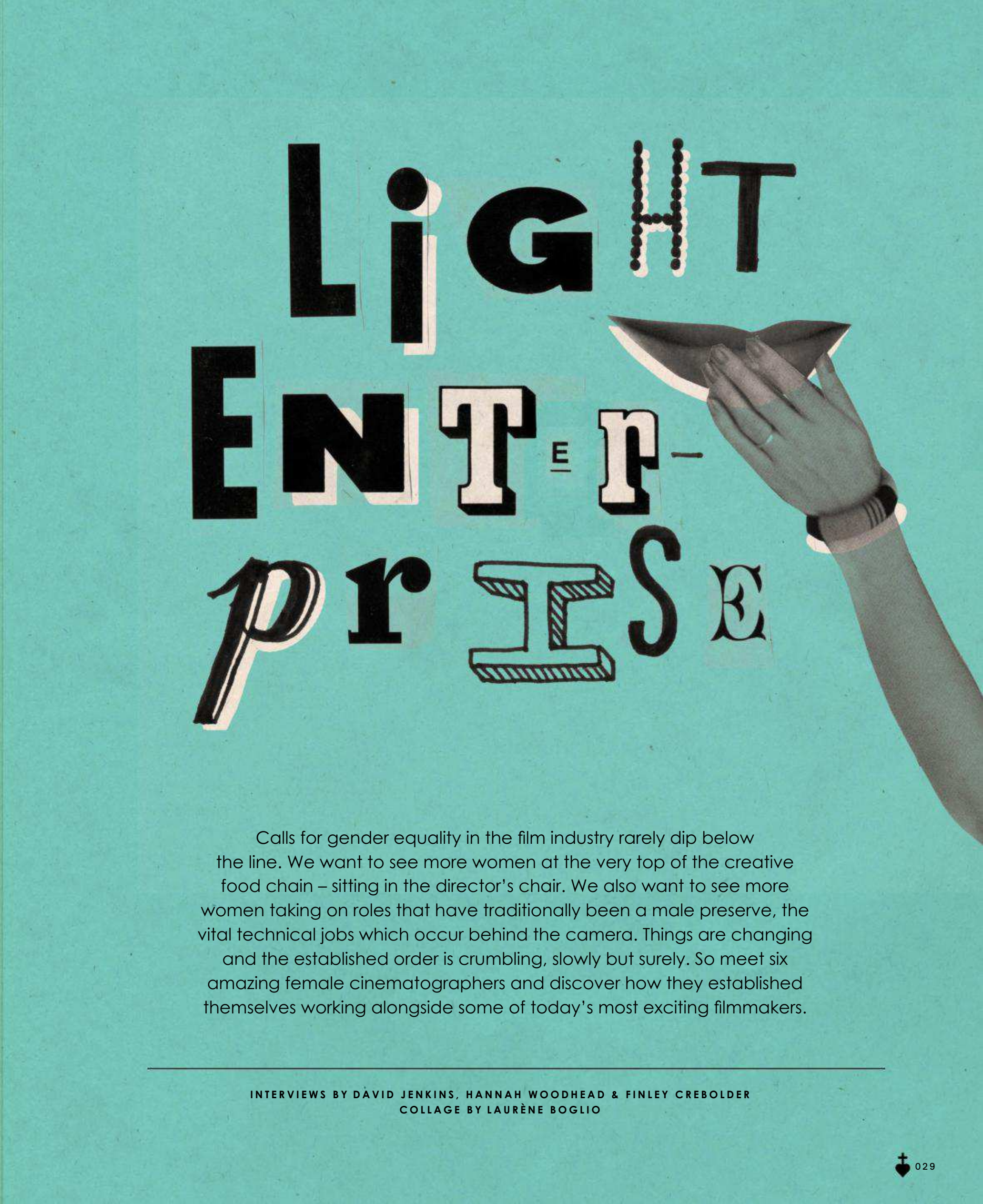
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A hand holding a paper airplane against a teal background with the text 'LIGHT ENTRENPREIS'. The text is arranged in three rows: 'LiGHT' (with 'H' made of beads), 'ENT_r-', and 'p r I S E'.

LiGHT ENT_r- p r I S E

Calls for gender equality in the film industry rarely dip below the line. We want to see more women at the very top of the creative food chain – sitting in the director’s chair. We also want to see more women taking on roles that have traditionally been a male preserve, the vital technical jobs which occur behind the camera. Things are changing and the established order is crumbling, slowly but surely. So meet six amazing female cinematographers and discover how they established themselves working alongside some of today’s most exciting filmmakers.

INTERVIEWS BY DAVID JENKINS, HANNAH WOODHEAD & FINLEY CREBOLDER
COLLAGE BY LAURÈNE BOGLIO



Ashley Connor

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

Jackrabbit, Person to Person, Thou Wast Mild and Lovely, Madeline's Madeline, The Miseducation of Cameron Post

Who were your mentors when you were first starting out?

You know, I wish I could say I had a mentor. I was certainly looking for one. My college professors really guided me, people like Cathy Crane or Jason Livingston. They made me the cinematographer I am today. In the early days, I don't think I had much guidance. I had a group of supporters, women who I would babysit for and they would help me to get small jobs, shooting a fashion thing or something like that. I studied at Ithaca College in Upstate New York, but I grew up in a suburb of Los Angeles, and when I decided I wanted to learn about film, I said, 'Fuck the LA schools, fuck all the Hollywood programmes – that's not me!' I found this strange little experimental programme at Ithaca that trained you to use actual film.

Who are your favourite visual artists? If you were to go back and look at the films I made in college, the most influential people were Maya Deren, Marie Menken and Bruce Conner. They were the artists I really loved and appreciated. I think there were also cinematographers that I loved. But I read a lot of feminist theory too, people like Judith Butler. The reason why I prefer to do music videos to commercials is that there is greater potential for experimentation. Some of the videos I get to direct, I go back into that mentality. That's where my playfulness gets used. When I do experimental movies, like the ones with Josephine Decker [*Butter on the Latch, Thou Wast Mild and Lovely, Madeline's Madeline*], I get to explore that side of things.

What essential piece of kit could you not be without on set?

My joke answer is tampons. It's just an open mind, really. It's the best tool to bring to a set – remembering there's no right way to approach a film. Every project asks for something new. You know, if it's the tech side of things, I always bring my camera, I always bring my Artemis app, I always bring my light meter. But really, it's more about mentally preparing for each project. I love to get in the mood for a project. I love to ask the director if there's any particular music they've been listening to or any books they've been reading. Anything from the most abstract to the most specific. Whatever's influencing

them, I too want to absorb. I just wrapped shooting Carrie Brownstein's new movie [*Search and Destroy*]. It takes place in the '90s and it's kind of a fictionalised version of her memoir and the formation of her band Sleater-Kinney. For that project, it was very much a case of watching a lot of documentaries from that time and listening to the music.

When did you realise you wanted to be a cinematographer?

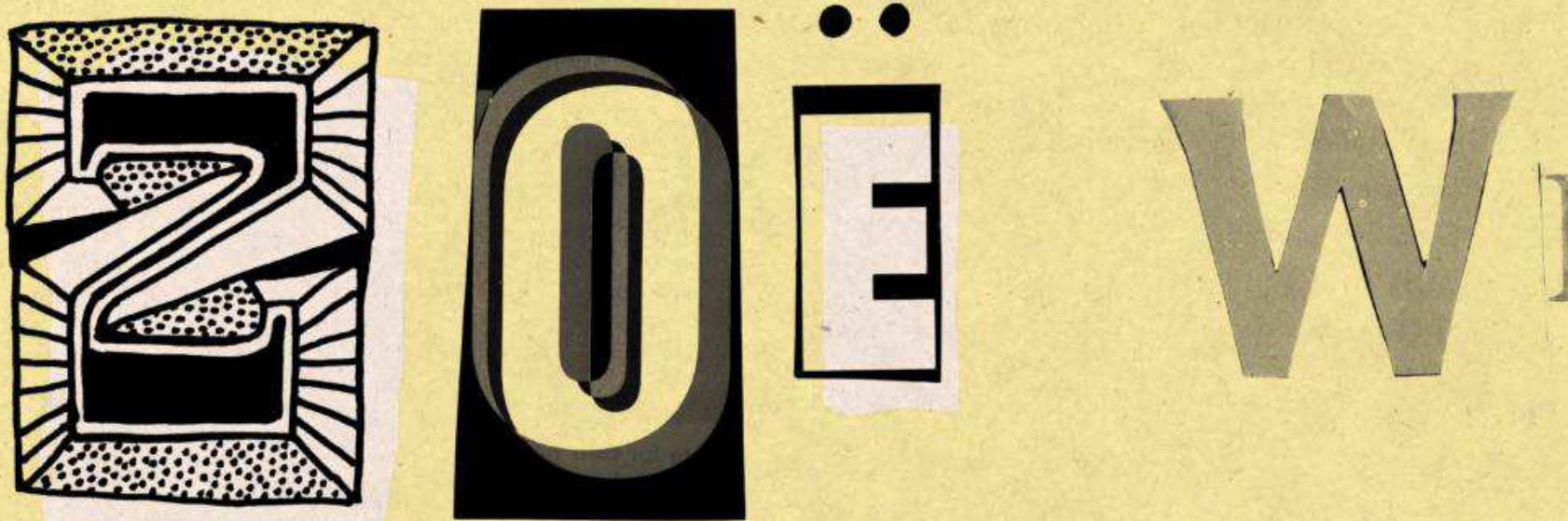
For me, there's almost this level of embarrassment when it comes to finding out the roles of people on film sets. I was always interested in film, but when I was younger I didn't really understand the breakdown. The internet was pretty new. Google was new. I didn't have a knowledge base, and when I got to college and started making work, I just realised I was more attracted to the visual and the mechanical side of things. My personal work still extends from a very visual place.

Do you remember the first compliment you received for your work?

During my freshman year in college, I made a very strange final project. It was [David] Lynch inspired. I thought outside the box a little bit, and my instructors responded to it. I think that was the first boost I had. After all the films had played, they came up to me and said, 'That was fantastic', and that really meant a lot. It's a terrible drug that no filmmaker can get away from: the desire to compliment and be complimented.

What is the future of cinematography?

I'm pretty old school when it comes to my technology and what draws me into filmmaking. I'm sure there are some people who are like, 'VR is the next wave!' Yeah, whatever. I like telling stories. I'd actually like films to revert back a couple of years and just focus on something pure. You don't need all these bells and whistles. Just tell a good story in a beautiful, enriching way. I don't know what the future is, but I'm just so bored with films that are so... ostentatious and into themselves. I'm not going to put my dick on the table. You don't have to show everything all at once. You can be more reserved and it can be more about the story and less about the cinematography 🌀



SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY *Catfight, Nancy, Princess Cyd, The Handmaid's Tale*

When did you realise you wanted to be a cinematographer?

I knew from a very young age that I wanted to be a filmmaker, but cinematography didn't come until I got to film school. My school had a very hands-on curriculum, they made you have a go at all the different disciplines. It became clear to me pretty quickly that when I was on the camera, I didn't want to be anywhere else. Then I realised that movie making to me meant the creation of images, and the expression of ideas through visuals. As soon as I came to that realisation there was no other job that I wanted to do.

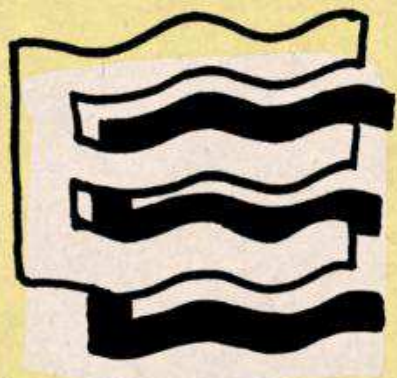
Who were your mentors when you were first starting out?

After I left school I worked with Jim Chressanthis; that was my first taste of a quintessential cinematographer working in and around Los Angeles. After that I spent an entire year working for another DoP, Newton Thomas Sigel, for the entire shoot of *Superman Returns* in Sydney. Tom became a friend and a mentor, and it was an opportunity to just really observe for an extended period of time and see the many ways the cinematographer is involved in a production. Reed Morano has been a real inspiration, and because she's only a couple of years older than me, she's someone that I can look up to quite directly and see paving the way.

It's really helpful to have another female DoP who is, in my mind, a couple of steps ahead. I was amazed at Ellen Kuras' work on *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* and Maryse Alberti on *The Wrestler*. It's been a couple of decades of slow progress, trying to equal this ratio of men to women. I feel like it's starting to gain a lot more momentum now.

It's crazy how long it's taken for women working in cinematography to get recognition – like the fact that Rachel Morrison last year was the first woman ever nominated for the Best Cinematography Oscar. I feel like at film school, I didn't think of it as being an unusual thing to want to be a cinematographer when the two main requirements of the job are to have two eyes and a brain. I didn't see why that had to be gender specific. I think that there used to be arguments in the industry that you had to be physically stronger and more capable of lugging gear – somehow for decades that was the singular obstruction as to why women couldn't find their way in. Clearly there was a huge industry bias that led so many female dreamers to not even imagine that this was a career that they could pursue. Thank God that's changing, right? There's no reason that any woman should think that there are any particular requirements of this career that men are more suited to.

H I t



What essential piece of kit could you not be without on set?

This is kind of boring, but it's become my iPhone. I've become really reliant on it, particularly the Artemis app because it's just so quick and convenient. I wish I could be romantic and say that it's a light meter but that's just not what I'm commonly feeling attached to on set anymore. Artemis, especially when I'm location scouting and looking at shots and parameters, helps me communicate really fast with directors and the rest of the crew.

What is the future of cinematography? Right now I'm just really excited by how much good narrative there still is. There's this conversation about whether cinema is dying, but after working on a show as artistic and creative and beautiful as *The Handmaid's Tale*, and then being aware of how there's so many avenues to explore, whether it's TV, arthouse film or auteur directors taking on blockbusters – there just seems to be a new wave of diversity and a very cinematic level standard to which so much narrative work is still being made. It seems limitless, there's so much to discover and explore with character and with story. There's a lot of negativity and a lot of criticism about the industry and where it's going but I feel like there's an abundance of incredible stories that are out there to tell



NANU SEGA

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY *Song of Songs, Shrooms, The Levelling, An Evening With Beverly Luff Linn*

Who were your mentors when you were first starting out?

I didn't really have a long-running mentorship, which I guess maybe you'd get on set if you were working with the same DoPs and assistants. That didn't really happen for me, so I guess all my learning came at film school. We had an amazing cinematographer, Billy Williams, come to us and we had a legendary lighting masterclass where you'd get these fantastic exercises – you know it'd be something like a burglar comes into a house, it's dark, somebody comes into the room, they turn on the lights; all these really fun things and challenges which were kind of the highlights of the year.

Is visual art, like photography and painting, important to you?

Yes. I've tried to gather a couple of hobbies, and I have maybe a couple of things I enjoy that aren't visually related, but basically my hobbies are going to a bookshop and looking at photography books. It'd be a bit of an expensive endeavour to buy them all. But yeah, I love looking at films but it's also nice to look at still images, because it's not directly related but it is related to what I do. Looking at paintings is really interesting too, but I probably tend to look more towards fine art photography and stills and other films when I think about work. The other thing is just to open up your eyes to what's around you. Especially when you've just come off a shoot, your brain will be constantly analysing the way the natural light is working or where somebody is sitting in relationship to all the lighting sources – sort of taking in the world around you almost like a robot, scanning everything.

What essential piece of kit could you not be without on set?

Besides the camera and the lenses? For me it's the light meter. Not everybody uses light meters anymore. They help to check the brightness of the scene. People use waveforms and false colour – there are other ways to measure light in the digital realm. Cameras have ways to gauge how much light is hitting the sensor without a light meter. Some people are like, 'Ooh what are you doing with a light meter?' I don't

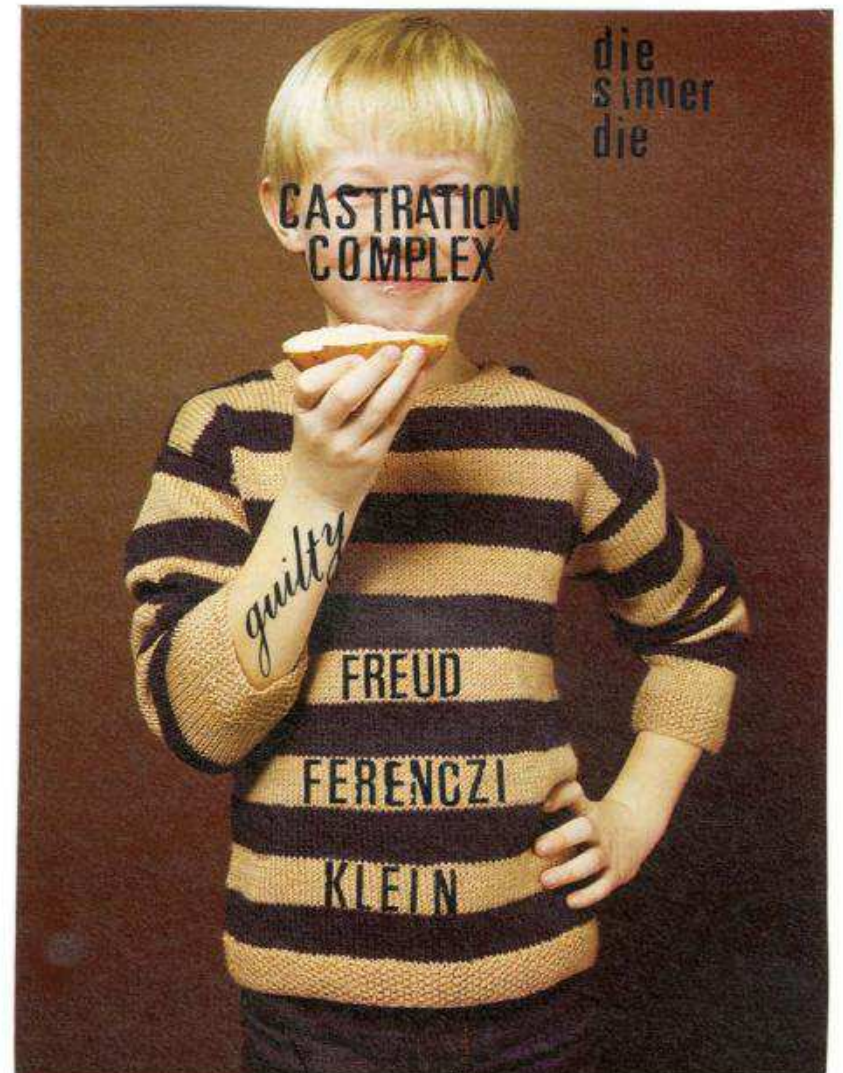
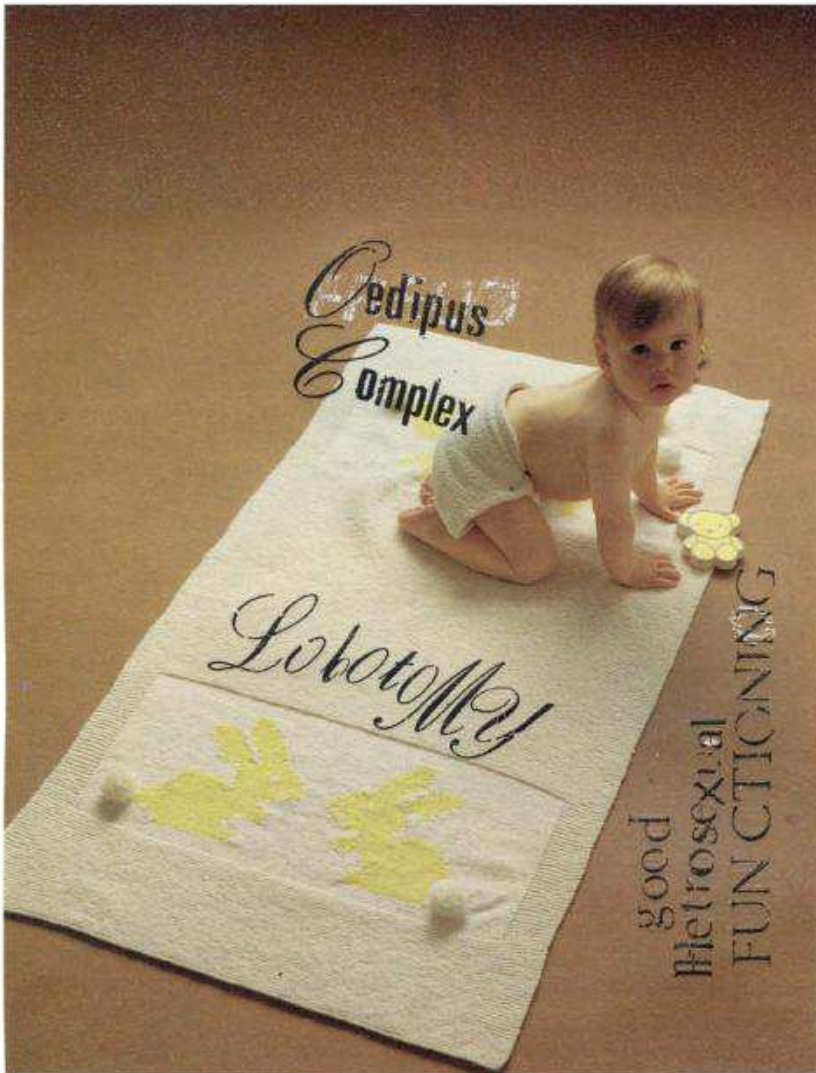
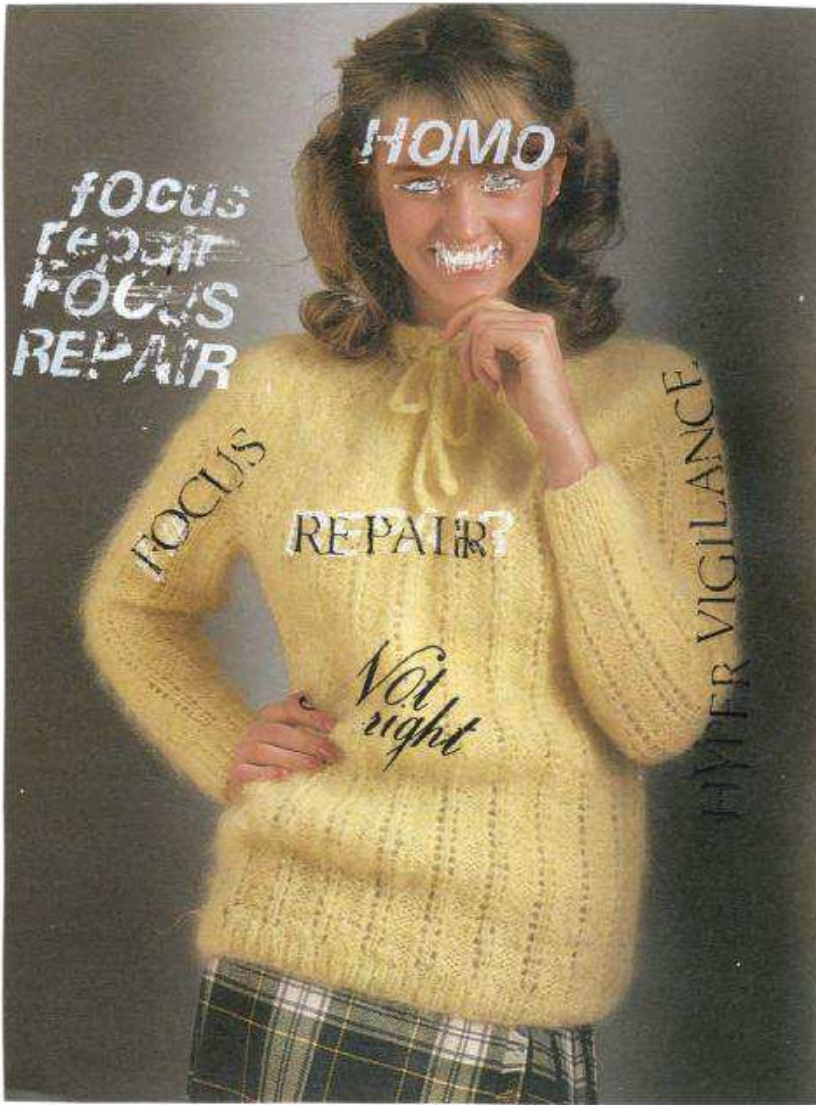
use it as slavishly as I used to when I shot on film, but I still use it because I'm checking in with the help of the camera where I'm at. So yeah, I'll definitely use that, and if I don't have it with me or if I drop it and can't get it, I feel bereft, so I have to have my light meter with me on my hip at all times. So that's my constant companion and friend.

When did you realise you wanted to be a cinematographer?

I decided that in my last year of university. I was at Oxford doing chemistry. I became this big filmgoing nerd and just fell in love with filmmaking. I was probably about 20 and I didn't know anything about cinematography. I just sort of fell in love with it. There's not a particular route to becoming a cinematographer – it's an interesting and unpredictable path. Back then I bought a Pentax ME Super, which was a stills camera, so that was my first camera, and my only camera for probably 10 years. When I left university, I worked as a camera assistant, so I'd go to the camera rental companies and learn how to load a camera – I spent quite a lot of time in Panavision because they're very welcoming to people who want to be technicians and learn about cameras, so if they've got cameras available you can go in and just sort of get on with it. That's how I learned how to do it. Then I was camera assisting and working with cameras and you just sort of start building and learning and finding your way.

What is the future of cinematography? Well, in the short term it's large format sensors, but that doesn't change the essential dynamic of the job. The sensors are getting bigger, and as they get bigger we're having to make new lenses or refurbish old ones to cover the sensors. It sort of changes the way focus works. It means you'll get the quality of 70mm film with digital cameras. Things are going in that direction. That's the biggest shift I've seen. New cameras for new sensors, and new glass, so that's cool. Stuff to play with, stuff to talk about 🎥





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ARRI WERNER.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY *The Kettering Incident, Lady Macbeth, In Fabric, The True History of the Kelly Gang*

When did you realise you wanted to be a cinematographer?

In high school I was really into writing and photography, then I discovered film quite late as a medium, towards the end of high school. As soon as I discovered there was this role where you're kind of combining the two and doing this visual storytelling, and I knew what a cinematographer was, I knew I wanted to do that. It comes from the combination of those two things: loving writing and photography.

Who were your mentors when you were first starting out?

The first main mentor I had was Greig Fraser. I did a Camera Attachment which is kind of like an internship with him on a film, and the plan was I'd be second unit, so that was hugely influential in that I was working with him and learning from him at the same time. I remember I was sent out to do some second unit work, and he was talking to me about what he wanted, and then he said, 'You know what, just trust your instincts and you'll know what to do when you get there.' I was slightly terrified but it's such a great feeling when someone that you really respect gives you the chance to show them what you've got.

Who are your favourite visual artists? I try to start each project with a blank slate, and try to avoid having a particular painter or cinematographer or filmmaker I look to. You could have a period film but your references could be quite contemporary, or the opposite, so I just try and avoid having set favourites. Ideally every new project is a foundation of what you know, with a whole lot of new ideas. I try and really listen to a director and listen to the script, and what the project needs, and what's relevant.

Lady Macbeth is one of those films where it's a period setting, but there's something contemporary about it. What was the process of shooting that like for you? When I came aboard the project I was in Melbourne and couldn't leave straight away, so William [Oldroyd] and I had a Skype pre-production for two weeks. It was this really intense, focused thing where we'd read the script from start

to finish and talk about each scene and our ideas for it. The themes in the script really informed the imagery; we really wanted to make the house feel like a prison, so we decided we didn't want to move the camera and keep it very rigid. When Katherine wasn't under supervision there was a sense of freedom, so we went handheld and had these bursts of energy. It was important to us that viewers really associated with her, because we knew things were going to get messy at the end, so we kept her in the centre of the frame, and as much as possible had the camera at eye level, so you're really seeing everything with her. The good thing about going over and over it is that by the third or fourth pass, you've distilled and crystallised these ideas into something that makes sense. There were two scenes that we hoped would be really confronting, where you want to look away and you can't – kind of a Michael Haneke tribute. William and I are big fans of Haneke and that's something he does quite well. Visually he really makes you watch what you don't want to see.

What essential piece of kit could you not be without on set?

This one's really practical – the right clothing for the conditions! If you've got the wrong kind of socks on, it's really hard to overcome that and have a day where you're thinking clearly. I guess that and a plan for the day are pretty essential. I do my best work when there's a pretty solid, specific-as-you-can-be plan.

What is the future of cinematography? It'll be great to see more diversity with everything, including us becoming more aware of different regions of cinema we don't usually engage with – Middle Eastern, Asian, African cinema. We need more diverse stories set in English-speaking countries but also diversity in what people are seeking out. Film is such a unique medium in that it really allows you to be in someone's point of view for a moment and see their world. Then diversity in crew, as well as in directors and actors, so we get to a place where films are so diverse that the main news story around a film isn't that it has a female cinematographer or a female lead. The most interesting stories will stand out



Natasha Shada

BRAIER

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY *Glue, XXY, The Rover, The Neon Demon, Gloria, Honey Boy*

When did you realise you wanted to be a cinematographer?

It was all part of a process really. I started as a photographer when I was a teenager and when I finished high school I enrolled in a three year, black and white artistic photography school, which was like a post-graduate thing. I had my own darkroom at home, and I really thought I was going to be a photographer. But some of my fellow students were then going to film school, and because they specialised in photography they were becoming cinematographers. I come from a film-loving family. Movies have been a big presence in my life since childhood. It all makes sense to me.

Who were your mentors when you were first starting out?

I had heroes that I admired – people who inspired me, but I didn't necessarily have mentors. There was Joe Dunton, who owns Dunton Cameras. He's the father of Erica Dunton who was with me in film school. He's not a cinematographer, he makes lenses mainly. He was Kubrick's technical advisor,

and because he was my friend's father I could always talk to him about that side of things. He supported me any time I wanted to experiment. If I had to name a mentor it would be him. He didn't get me jobs or help me rise up in the industry, but he inspired me greatly. I saw him recently at the International Cinematographers Summit and we spent an afternoon together.

Who are your favourite visual artists? There are a lot of artists who have inspired me. Different people in different moments of my journey. I would love to be able to make visual mood boards, but I always seem to come on to jobs with limited time to prep. I go from job to job to job. I never really have the luxury of pre-production. Sometimes the directors bring a mood board, as a way to start a conversation. They might show it to you when you're interviewing for the job. I don't think I've ever made one before. Sometimes directors will give me films to watch that they've been watching.



What essential piece of kit could you not be without on set?

Nowadays I build some of my own lights and devices to help with the process. All of that is so much of my kit that I would not be able to do the stuff I'm doing without it. But I'm also getting really used to working with LED lighting and controlling everything from an iPad. The more you get used to using new processes, the more difficult it is to go back to the old ones. LED lights have really changed things in terms of logistics and movement on the set, in terms of being able to amend colours very quickly. You don't need gels and things like that. It makes things more efficient and unobtrusive. You can do a lot more without people being on set. That's really great for the actors as they feel your presence less. It gives them freedom. So that would be my game changer. There's another thing called an easy rig which I use. They've been around for 20 years. They distribute the weight of the camera when you're doing hand-held. You get less tired using that. The model that existed was only for men, and only recently did they make one which women can use – it's called The Queen.

Do you recall the first really important compliment you received for your work? No, I don't recall it. I guess I'm too old.

What is the future of cinematography? I want to be optimistic and say that we're going to still be telling meaningful stories, even if the world is becoming something very crazy that I don't understand. Hopefully it won't all be superhero movies, green screen, films that feel like video games. I think that the cinematographer's work is going to remain being that vital right hand of the director. Helping the director to bring his or her vision to life through images. Hopefully that's not going to change. The technology is changing, which just makes the process that much faster. Everything is smaller, lighter and quicker now. There are no wires any more. There are fewer restraints. We're getting more and more tools which help to broaden our palette. I love my job. I think it is the best job in the world. I would never want to trade it for directing. I don't see being a cinematographer as just a stepping stone. If one day I do have a story that I feel I need to tell, then I probably would direct it. But it would have to be something that I absolutely needed to say 🎥

CHARLOTTE BRUUS CHRISTENSEN

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY *Submarino, The Hunt, Far From the Madding Crowd, Fences, Molly's Game, A Quiet Place*

When did you realise you wanted to be a cinematographer?

I didn't know for a while. I was very interested in photography when I was a kid. I think I was only eight or nine years old when I wanted to borrow my parents' still cameras and things like that. I used to take eight or 10 photographs that were telling a little story. So this guy, who was actually a film composer and a friend of my parents, came up to me and said, 'Do you know there's actually a job where you can tell stories with a camera?' He kind of introduced me to the idea of cinematography, and from then on I read about it. I don't have family connections in the industry: my dad is a farmer and my mum is a hairdresser, so it was kind of from scratch.

Who were your mentors when you were first starting out?

Before I started film school, I loved looking at Scandinavian movies, like those by Ingmar Bergman. I read a lot about his cinematographer, Sven Nykvist. I didn't know him so he wasn't like a personal mentor but he was someone that I studied a lot. My first real mentor actually became our tutor at film school: Brian Tufano. Even after film school I kept calling him and he was always very helpful. He also gave us a lot in terms of mentality and attitude and things you need to know about other than just lighting and framing. I always study other cinematographers, but it's not like, 'Oh, I only study this person or that person', it's just cinematography in general that inspires me.

You were recently teaching at the Sundance Institute yourself. Is that something you enjoy doing?

Yes! That was really fun! I love that. We need to give a lot to the youth, to people studying, and inspire them and mentor them. I think that's the place we need to go with film schools, and people who are self-taught. Take them out on set, I think that's what we can do. You know, we can all do little videos or go on Instagram and write things, but really I think what needs to be done is for us to give our expertise to young kids and inspire them.

Outside of film, do you have any favourite visual artists, such as painters or photographers?

I keep going back to Bergman

and his cinematographer Sven Nykvist, because when I was a kid they did really set the whole thing off for me. But I love to see different people's work. I get inspired by how people approach things differently, and not getting attached to one specific person or their work.


What essential piece of kit could you not be without on set?

The viewfinder. A lot of people operate from monitors these days because increasingly it's such a digital medium. But I'm very attached to a good viewfinder. I can't work with these small modern monitors. I also use my light meter a lot – it's really helpful to understand the ratio of the light. I'd say mainly a viewfinder though. Sometimes, with all these digital cameras, they're like, 'Do you need a viewfinder?', and I'm like, 'Yeah, I need a viewfinder. And it needs to be a good one!'

What was the first compliment you received on a piece of work you'd done?

I don't remember! If there has been one I have probably been too humble to receive it! I always feel that what people do compliment though is framing. Framing a story. I think that's one of the compliments I get the most, that the story is framed well.

What is the future of cinematography?

I think physical film stock will stick around. I've always said that. I think each medium is great for different stories – they don't all need the same one. There is enough room for everything. It's just a matter of each person choosing the right medium for whatever story it is that they want to tell. I think if people stay true to what they do, film will survive. But we've seen that digital has taken over and more movies are being shot on it, I think that that was always going to happen. Now that's happened, I don't think film will die, it might just be a smaller medium than digital. I'm doing my best to keep it alive anyway. I've shot a lot of film. It's a whole way of working. It's not only the quality of the image that comes out, but the way you light it, the way you work with the viewfinder because you don't have such detailed monitors. People have got to choose what's right for their project 

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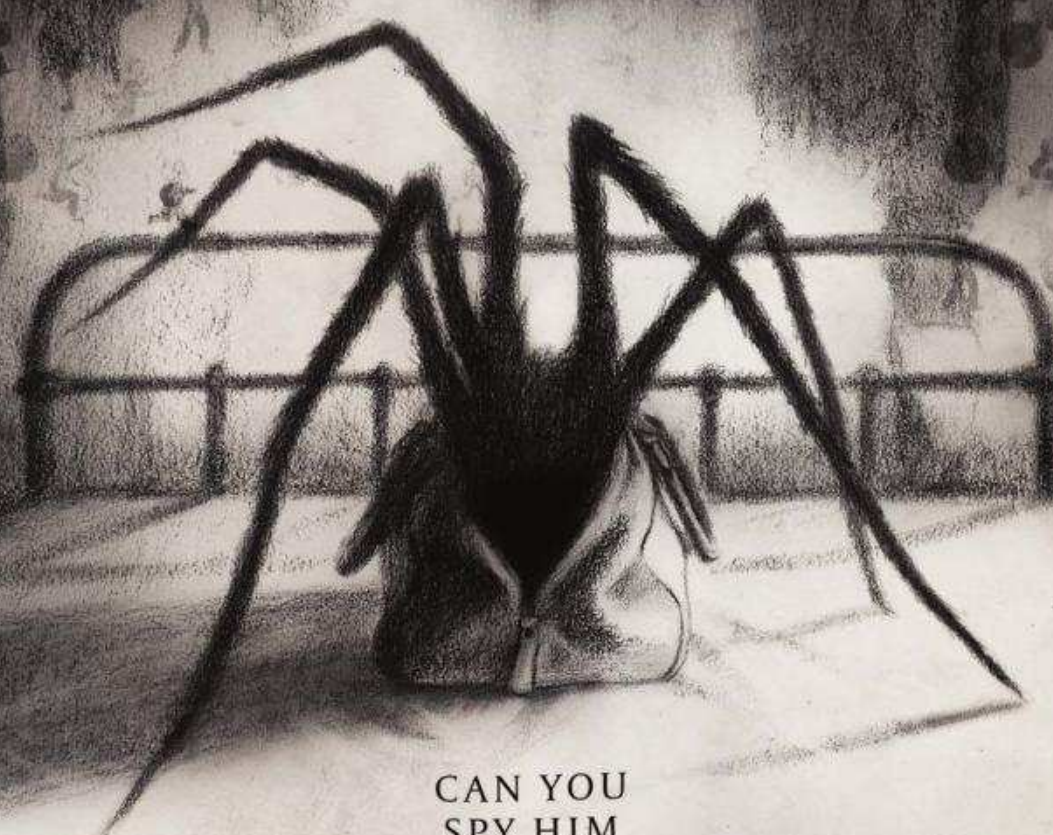
NERDLY



SHORT COM



CULTURE FIX



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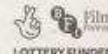
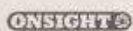
BLACK
AS SIN.

A FILM BY MATTHEW HOLNESS
SEAN HARRIS ALUN ARMSTRONG

POSSUM

ORIGINAL MUSIC BY THE RADIOPHONIC WORKSHOP

THE BFI PRESENTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE FYZZ FACILITY FILM 14 LIMITED, BANKSIDE FILMS & FYZZ FACILITY PRODUCTION FOR EVANDINE PRODUCTIONS PRODUCED IN ASSOCIATION WITH KODAK/CINELAB A FILM BY MATTHEW HOLNESS 'POSSUM' STARRING SEAN HARRIS AND ALUN ARMSTRONG
CASTING DIRECTOR COLIN JONES COSTUME DESIGNER NATALIE WARD HAIR & MAKE-UP DESIGNER EMMA SCOTT SOUND BY RECORDINGS MIXER ASHOK KUMAR KUMAR PRODUCTION DESIGNER CHARLOTTE PEARSON DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY KIT FRASER EDITOR TOMMY BOULDING ORIGINAL MUSIC BY THE RADIOPHONIC WORKSHOP
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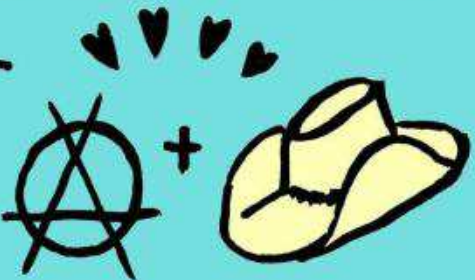
Stone

WASH

DEANIM



AND
Soft flexible



PUNKS & COWBOYS

TOGETHER

(DISTRESS
2
IMPRESS)

FOR
THAT LATE
EARLY
80s / 90s FEEL

Threads

Illustration by Laurène Boglio

#7: Stonewash Denim

Few would argue that jeans are anything but a quintessential staple of any wardrobe. Classic blue jeans stand the test of time; skinny jeans have been in style for decades. But not all denim is created equal, and stonewash jeans are definitely low on the totem pole. Stonewash (or acid-wash) denim is most often thought of as a dated signifier of the 1980s and early '90s, closely associated with hair metal bands. From *Desperately Seeking Susan* to *My Cousin Vinny*, when they pop up in cinema they tend to be anachronistic eyesores.

Stonewash was first invented and released by the clothing brand Guess in 1981. It was a method of fading and mottling the dyes in denim, usually achieved with chlorine bleach and pumice stone. The effect was a lived-in, worn-down style copycatting the DIY approach favoured by punks and skinheads of the era. Originally, bleach splashes and safety pins were used to mutilate ordinary clothing, indicating an anti-consumerist attitude that went out of its way to avoid looking 'nice'. Latter-day cinematic depictions of skinhead or punk subculture often feature the item, as with *SLC Punk!* from 1998 and Shane Meadows' *This Is England*, set in 1983. This might have been the only brief moment when stonewash was cool.

In light of this, it's strange that the most notable wearers of stonewash jeans on-screen are, well, kind of square. In *Dirty Dancing*, Jennifer Gray runs around in a pair of stonewash shorts; the letterman-jacketed jock played by Emilio Estevez in *The Breakfast Club* can also be found in this maligned style of denim. In the music video for her hit song 'I Think We're Alone Now', teen pop icon Tiffany has a full outfit made of the stuff, and a slew of other pop culture figures popularised it.

In *Steel Magnolias*, double denim queen Dolly Parton is surprisingly not the one to be found in stonewash – but it's there, and it sure is ugly. Meanwhile, on popular television show

Saved by the Bell, wholesome main character Zack often wore stonewash jeans. When this trend entered the mainstream, it seemed to be displayed by America's most whitebread figures.

By the end of the '80s, as styles toned down somewhat, people who were still wearing stonewash denim were often openly seen as uncool or comic: the style pops up on the silly rock obsessives in *Wayne's World* and on ditsy, gum-smacking Marisa Tomei in *My Cousin Vinny*. Perhaps most damning is the appearance of stonewash in Mike Nichols' *Working Girl* – it goes out the window along with mega-teased hair and colourful makeup in Melanie Griffith's professional transformation. As she sheds her Staten Island tackiness for sleek yuppie sophistication, acid wash becomes the *bête noire* of a classy wardrobe.

In a way, stonewash denim's change from counterculture statement to meaningless trend is indicative of the larger story of '80s America. Rebellious youth subcultures became subsumed by Reaganite prosperity and conservatism, and the most popular escapist films of the day saw their blandest characters donning what was once radical. Given its alternative, anti-fashion origins, there was some irony to the popularisation of stonewash. After it was patented by an Italian company and mass manufactured, its creation required methods that made it more expensive to produce than ordinary, tidy-looking denim. Paying more to damage your clothing and gain 'authenticity' through it seems like the ultimate joke of '80s consumerism.

In the course of a decade, stonewash jeans went from a mark of the DIY punk aesthetic to the style of choice for Bon Jovi and Whitesnake. But maybe the punks got the last laugh. As John Lydon once said, "I made ugly beautiful. Through sheer persistence." He may have been talking about more than the aesthetics of punk, but his statement is pretty aptly applied to the journey of the stonewash denim jean 🌀



THE MISEDUCATION OF CAMERON POST ISSUE

REVIEWS COURTNEY'S

46-48
Interview: Agnès Varda

50-51
Faces Places

54
American Animals

55
Cold War

56-57
Feature: In Praise of The Evil Dead

58
The Children Act

59
The Rider

60
Columbus

51
Interview: Kogonada

62
The Wife

63
A Sicilian Ghost Story

64
The Heiresses / Lucky

65
Upgrade / Under the Wire

66
Tehran Taboo

67
Interview: Ali Soozandeh

68
Distant Constellation

69
Mandy

70
BlacKkKlansman

71
The Women (1939)

72
Shirkers

73
Interview: Sandi Tan

74
Yardie

75
El mar la mar

76
Dogman

78
The Apparition

79
Interview: Xavier Giannoli

80
Skate Kitchen / Climax

81
Mantangi/Maya/M.I.A. / The Man from Mo'Wax

82-84
Feature: The Other Side of Orson Welles

86-87
Feature: The Resurrection of the Video Store

88-91
Home Ents

92-93
Journeys: Ingmar Bergman's Fårö



Agnès Varda

An audience with the poetic and loquacious goddess of French cinema.

Picture the scene: a hotel in Paris with journalists forming a small row in front of a glass table, which itself sits in front of an oversized sofa. There are young people with asymmetric haircuts stood in the door pressing on an earpiece and speaking into a microphone. They look like the Dalston FBI. There is a frisson of panic the air. It seems that their star attraction has gone missing. Maybe she took a wrong turn down one of the many snaking corridors in this maze-like hotel? Or maybe, more likely, she just decided to sack off her schedule and go her own way? Eventually, Agnès Varda, 89 at the time of writing, enters the room – she possesses the air of an eccentric royal figurehead from a make-believe country.

She jokes about how she's never been commercially successful as a filmmaker, but if this is true, it's because her films are cheerily nonconformist – the world has yet to catch up to her. Glancing back across her spectacular career, highlights include her pathfinding debut, *La Pointe Courte*, her bitterly ironic take on adultery, *Le Bonheur*, the delightful documentary portrait of her own street, *Daguerréotypes*, Venice Golden Lion winner *Vagabond* and her heartbreaking, ramshackle ode to France's working classes, *The Gleaners and I*. Her new film, *Faces Places*, sits cosily within her personal canon of greats, a tour around France in the company of conceptual photographer JR to explore the relationship between art and landscape. What follows is an unprompted monologue delivered by Varda upon entering the room.

"I love to speak about cinema. I'm not selling anything. I guess you want me to talk about about *Faces Places*? I can speak about other things, you know. I hate to talk without JR, because we did the film together hand-in-hand. We did the promotion, we did the festivals, we did everything. When we met we had the same desires and the same feelings. We wanted to meet people who have no power. Trust, luck and chance brought us new things, new people, different people.

"We had a magical truck. I fell in love with that truck. The little photo comes out the side. People love it. They paste them on the wall and they feel like there is suddenly a community. Showing images is a way of sharing. In some villages people say, 'Sometimes we don't get along, but putting our images together makes it better.' We had in mind to go to different places in France. Near the sea, in the middle, in the south, in the north. We went to the north and we wanted to meet people who lived in houses that were built for the local miners. There are no longer mines so they should leave the houses, but we were told that some women decided to stay.

"Chance brought us to a woman called Jeanine. We got along, and it was so interesting. She told us how sad she was at the passing of her father. It became something very warm, and when JR put her face on the house, she was so touched. If you have seen the film, you love Jeanine. That's what we wanted. We wanted the audience to love the people we met and share something with them. When we played the film in her village she said it made the memory stronger. We built something everywhere we went.

"We learned also about the agriculture of today, the way farming is so different from how it once was. I couldn't believe that a man alone can cover hectares with his machine and spend all day speaking with his computer. We did sociological work, but with a smile and a sense of joy. We didn't want to be serious and quiet. We shot one week per month over 18 months because I cannot do more than a week. We ran up and down the country, standing all the time. I'm strong, but not that strong. My daughter Rosalie – wonderful Rosalie! – used to be a costume designer but in the last five years she has begun to work for the company. I used to do everything, including producing, but she produced this film. She never said, 'Hurry up' but she always said, 'Do your thing'.

"The editing took quite a long time. For me the film takes its real shape in the editing, which I've always done. We put Jeanine at the beginning, so we have a real meeting with big emotions. Another example: JR had found one of the big block houses that had fallen from the cliff, and he wanted me to see it. I said, 'Okay, okay, I have already seen that, I have seen many of them'. Then he gave me the name of the place, the beach, and I'd been there in 1954, taking pictures with a friend of mine, who became the famous photographer Guy Bourdin. So, we took the pictures we had made and went to see the house where he was living with his grandmother. Using the imagination, that photo became a little bed for a child and became a grave for my friend. With imagination, our feelings become something beautiful. We knew that the tide would take it away, so we were working with the desire to build something that we knew wouldn't last. It was a beautiful grave for my friend Guy. His son was very impressed.

"In all the places we went, we met people. One day I said, 'We should have dessert, where should we go?' My assistant starts to look and says, 'I've found an abandoned village.' I didn't know about it, so we discovered that – a village that had been half built and abandoned. We sent a casting director a week before and I said, 'Try to find people in that village and bring them

“I have enjoyed meeting people. I have enjoyed sharing people with audiences. Small audiences. I never did it for the money.”


on Saturday.’ So we invited them for a picnic, and they came. By making these images it was like a revival. We played a game with them. We had people agree to play roles. It was not a real family but we built a family from the people. We had a dinner with them and the grandfather would fall asleep reading his newspaper. It was like a documentary-fiction thing. And then we left.

“The village has been destroyed after being like this for 20 years. Now they will build condominiums there, or something. We felt we were really connected to the life of that place, the disappeared life, the revival, and then it’s all gone. The mailman was so nice, he said, ‘Life has changed, you used to speak to the people and bring them their bread.’ All these little observations. Then the waitress who posed for us, she said, ‘I didn’t know the artwork would be that big, they give me compliments but I’m shy.’ Everyone who came gave her compliments. Her children said she was beautiful. It was like getting a piece of life everywhere, we wanted to take pictures and make portraits. It took us to the factory, and making jokes with them was like participating in their work. The factory workers said they had two days of fun, because we put fishes in the water tank, deciding they should swim in there. They saw we were a little crazy, but they enjoyed it – they helped us. It was allowing us to bring our imagination into the serious world of work. We were dancing with their life, proposing images, proposing a time of sharing.

“That’s my point: I have always been doing documentaries. I made my first film in 1954 – you were not even born yet. And I have enjoyed meeting people. I have enjoyed sharing people with audiences. Small audiences though; I never did it for the money. That’s why I am surprised that they gave me an Oscar invite. In my speech I say how I never made money, but I got prizes and recognition.

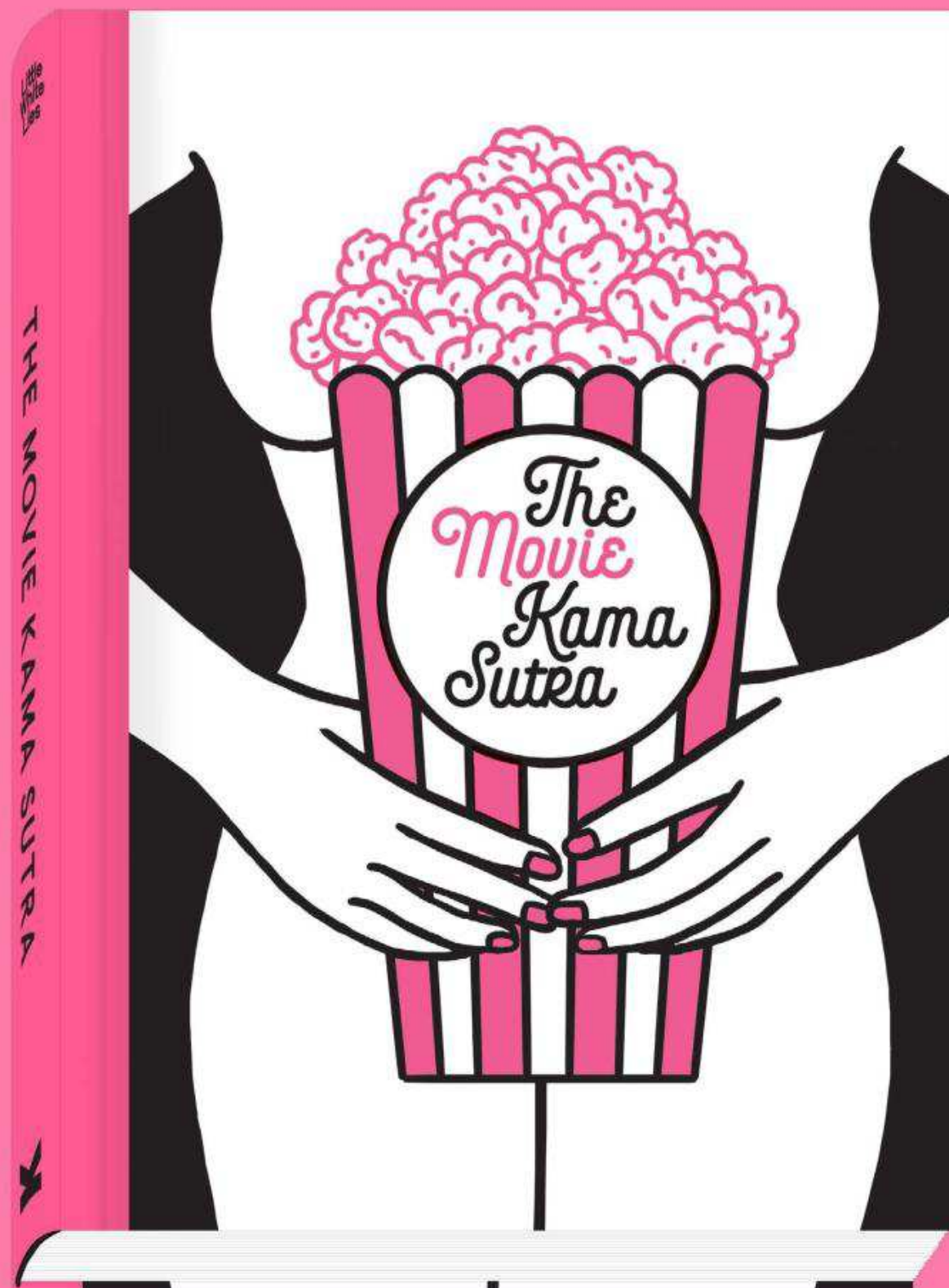
At the Oscars night I was looking around. Jennifer Lawrence, she’s worth \$4 million. Steven Spielberg, \$15 million [ed: actual worth \$3.6 billion]. I was imagining their value in money. It was like a field of money. I told them I was not bankable. I couldn’t bring money to anybody. I enjoy getting awards and some admiration, but I don’t make it a big fuss. I will just go on working as long as I’m strong enough. It’s nice to be recognised. When you get the Oscar, your price goes up and the sales are better.

“The film of mine that is still best known is *Cléo from 5 to 7*. The most fun one is called *One Hundred and One Nights*. I did it to celebrate 100 years of cinema, and I assembled all the famous actors in France, which I thought was impossible. The film was a failure, but I enjoyed having all these actors visiting me. I don’t think you would have seen the film, because it was such a flop. I enjoyed that film terribly, but nobody else did. This one, which I did with JR, I enjoyed very much. We enjoyed the fact that we could, with 55 years difference between us, have the same desires, the same feeling with people. He’s very funny and easy with people. He has a truck with ladders and scaffolding and people jump on it and ask questions.

“People have humour, and we tried to reflect that good mood and humour in the film. It was a real trip, real travel. There is a surprise at the end, because I thought we would meet Jean-Luc Godard, but he didn’t open the door. He gave a sequence to the film, he built something by not being there, because I was shocked. Then I said, ‘Let’s go to the lake and think about it’. I remember the beautiful years I had when Jacques Demy and me were friends with Godard and Anna Karina, and we spent time together. She made up that line, ‘*J’sais pas quoi faire* – What could I do?’ Because I say that to Jean, if he was near me he wanted to help me, he was so nice. He’d say, ‘What can I do?’ and take off his glasses. I sent him the DVD of the film. So far, no news as to whether he’s watched it” 



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Faces Places

Directed by
AGNÈS VARDA
JR

Starring
AGNÈS VARDA
JR

Released
21 SEPTEMBER

4

ANTICIPATION.

As if this won't be a joy.

5

ENJOYMENT.

*Like the most delicious,
lightly-flavoured alcohol
that somehow gets you
knock-out drunk.*

5

IN RETROSPECT.

"You see things blurry and you're happy."

“I’m not a mystic. I’m down to earth,” says Agnès Varda. Such is the fullness of my heart after *Faces Places* that the temptation is to hack into the trusty hyperbole cabinet and fling out polysyllabic, high-faluting terms for the type of film this is. However, to truly take in her work (this specific one *and* the sum of a 50-plus year career) is to recognise that it takes more than one person to make something brimming with human goodness. To deify Varda is to fall into a trap that she herself has side-stepped. Better to follow her example, better to run with demystification.

Cinema has always been a medium that worships the top dog with only drops of recognition trickling down to the anonymous armies whose assists are integral. Directors are more often than not content to bask in their perceived roles as superhuman magicians. *Faces Places* is a subtly self-reflexive documentary that swims against this tide, inviting audiences to see that filmmaking is a process of having conversations with people, and enveloping each individual and their private creativity within the wider collaborative process. Art is a form of social work or, rather, it can be with the right people at the helm.

Those people are Varda and her unlikely kindred spirit, the French photographer and muralist JR. They make an endearing and striking duo – an odd couple forged before a word of dialogue has even been spoken. At the time of filming, she is 88, while he is 33. Varda is short and roundish, with her trademark white bowl-cut fringed with amber. A lifelong lover of colour, her outfits are bright. JR is lanky, bald and styled like a blind jazz musician, all in black, complete with black hat and black shades. He is teased by Varda about the perma-present sunglasses, and this low key ribbing paves the way for as emotionally heavy a moment as this playful film has to deal. Eyes – what they see, who they see and how these visions land – are the lenses which connect to the filmmaker’s soul.

Faces Places, and its French title *Visages Villages*, aptly bears out Varda’s ‘down-to-earth’ mission. For these two elements make up the film’s core ingredient list: faces and places. A sprightly narrated overview delivered by the two filmmakers explains how they were both magnetically drawn to one another. They meet, bond, play and eat chocolate éclairs. Then they hit the road in a van equipped with a giant mobile poster printer. They search for people to photograph. Each subject is then blown up and printed out big enough to paste onto the nearest empty wall.

Every face-owner is given space to talk about the particulars of their life and pass comment on how it feels to see a giant image of themselves, or a loved one, looking out across their locale. In a village in Northern France, Jeannine, a woman who refuses to leave the row of miners’ cottages where her childhood memories live, begins to cry. A shy waitress in Bonnieux, Southern France is severely weirded out when her image goes viral. There is no narrative agenda to angle what is happening and how it is affecting people. It is just happening and it is being documented.

These social encounters are interspersed with conversations between the two leads, who travel into each other as they travel around the country. The intimacies that the bond between Varda and JR brings to the surface give a lightweight creative social project something twisting beneath, the breath of death on a warm summer’s day. To those familiar with the mighty Varda, this access to her inner world is precious. There is such tenderness in both the stark existentialism (she is looking forward to death because “that’s that”) and the giddy joys (miming the ringing of a bell as she sings along to the disco track, ‘Ring My Bell’). Watching feels like stealing up on a rare beast relaxing in their natural habitat.

Of course, the film is not so guileless as this. It is carefully scripted to transport one high into the land of others and below into an individual spirit. Varda’s strength as a documentarian is her connective thinking, previously most powerfully expressed in *The Gleaners and I*, in which she dignifies social outcasts by drawing parallels between their lives and the subjects of old paintings. In *Faces Places*, she turns this sideways understanding onto her own life, coaxed by JR. *The Beaches of Agnès* from 2008 is nominally Varda’s big autobiography, but this more streamlined work distills in a disarmingly breezy fashion the DNA of who she is as a human, as an artist, and as a humane artist.

SOPHIE MONKS KAUFMAN





IF YOU TH
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ARMING
VILLAGE,
RY MUBI.**

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American Animals

Directed by
BART LAYTON

Starring
BARRY KEOGHAN
EVAN PETERS
BLAKE JENNER

Released
7 SEPTEMBER

3

ANTICIPATION.

Who needs another film about how cool it is to be a modern cowboy?

4

ENJOYMENT.

Turns out we all need a movie about how silly aspiring cowboys are!

4

IN RETROSPECT.

A documentary about the fictions we tell ourselves, a fiction about the reality we can never escape.

In order to understand why four young, middle-class, white men from Kentucky would risk serious prison time by stealing some of the world's most valuable books from their university library, director Bart Layton shrewdly chooses to blend fact and fiction. The real men appear in interviews to each give their version of events, their diverging testimonies functioning as the ever-shifting building blocks of the fictionalisation that Layton presents with a cast of brilliant actors. The two masterminds are Barry Keoghan as Spencer Reinhard, a young painter worried that his life is too safe and boring to make him a good artist, and the excellent Evan Peters playing bad boy Warren Lipka, always up for sending a 'fuck you' to the system. Making their delusions of grandeur clearly visible, this narrative device is more than a gimmick: they are literally the stars of their own movie.

Looking back to the classics of crime cinema, depiction is not always endorsement, but denying the appeal of, say, Sterling Hayden's hardboiled thief in Stanley Kubrick's *The Killing* would be disingenuous. Glamorously defying society has always been an enticing feature of cinema, and the (anti-)heroes of *American Animals* have also succumbed to the appeal of gangster movies. What separates them from you and I is that they maintained their suspension of disbelief after the end credits – or rather never suspended it in the first place, instead taking Kubrick's high-flying act at face value. Inspired by the heroes of Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs*, Reinhard and Lipka, with additional muscle in the form of Eric Borsuk (Jared Abrahamson) and Chas

Allen (Blake Jenner), planned and executed, in 2004, one of the most audacious and ludicrous heists in modern history.

The juxtaposition of documentary and fiction filmmaking in *American Animals* reveals the dangerous power of imagination. Once Reinhard got it in his head that he could steal valuable items which Danny Ocean would not hesitate to stealthily make his, it only took Lipka's bravado to get the snowball rolling. Soon enough, their lives became consumed by planning the perfect robbery.

Layton goes much further in his attack on self-fictionalisation. Erasing the line between fact and fantasy, he makes the real-life protagonists face the plausibility of their subjective recollections by having them physically enter his reenactments and talk to their impersonators. This brutal confrontation is at once exhilarating and eerie. Opening up new possibilities for 'based on a true story' narrative cinema, it reminds us of our unavoidable accountability to the truth: the men soon realise that none of them know exactly what happened because each was too preoccupied with his own 'truth'.

When a bystander is hurt by the group's foolish and deeply selfish actions, Layton returns to the talking heads as the young men awaken to reality. Shaken out of their daydreams, they are finally out of words, sobbing and trying to avoid the camera's inescapable gaze. From the absurd story of four self-centred and bored friends, Layton has created a powerful hybrid film which decries, with entertaining panache and urgency, the utter nonsense of 'alternative facts'.

MANUELA LAZIC



Cold War

Directed by
PAWEŁ PAWLIKOWSKI
Starring
JOANNA KULIG
TOMASZ KOT
BORYS SZYC
Released
31 AUGUST

4

ANTICIPATION.

*Paweł Pawlikowski's follow-up to the all-conquering *Ida*.*

4

ENJOYMENT.

Visually dazzling, but its designer curtness is a hinderance.

3

IN RETROSPECT.

All the ingredients are there, but it doesn't quite come together.

Nationalism, or the question of how and why we love our country, feels extremely apropos in a political moment dominated by demagogues and loonbags. Furthermore, do we love a country with the same fervour, the same illogical impulse, the same sense of tenderness and longing, that we might love another human? This question is posed, albeit obliquely, in Paweł Pawlikowski's immaculately crafted and highly personal sixth fiction feature, his follow-up to 2013's massively successful meditation on identity and the legacy of the Holocaust, *Ida*.

As with that film, *Cold War* is photographed in smoky monochrome shades and within the stifling, boxy confines of the Academy ratio. The black and white serves the film perfectly as a visual shorthand, as it is a story which straddles the binary divide of Eastern and Western Europe in the years directly following World War Two.

Wiktor (Tomasz Kot) is a Polish musicologist on a mission to preserve the folk songs which offered those on the margins the smallest scintilla of hope during times of conflict. The plan is then to refine and stylise the music by transforming it into a public display of national pride. It is while formulating the show that he meets the enigmatic ice blonde Zula (Joanna Kulig) – arrested but not convicted for killing her father.

As Wiktor falls in love with Zula, he falls out of love with Poland, particularly as the Stalinist propaganda machine is looking to co-opt his work to build a romantic image of the suffering masses. The pair make a plan to flee together and this is

when the clever crux of Pawlikowski's emotionally tumultuous drama is revealed.

Where *Ida*'s small-scale story had far-reaching ramifications, here the narrative feels much grander as the characters hop between countries in an attempt to find a place where their love feels natural. Yet the film's curtness (it runs at an extremely swift 84 minutes) and the liberal use of ellipses between scenes (which expect the viewer to fill in a lot of blanks) serve to stymie the overall impact of a yearning romance which feels displaced from the classical Hollywood era. This is one of those very rare cases where it would have been nice to see some more colour and texture. It is also frustratingly difficult to get a sense of time passing, of things having happened, of events taking their toll on the psyche of the characters. Physically, neither lead seems to age across the film's two decade-plus timeframe.

That said, on a moment-by-moment basis, *Cold War* is often breathtaking, and Pawlikowski has clearly laboured over each and every shot to finesse camera movement, timing, choreography and shot length. A sequence in which Zula, having joined Wiktor in Paris, starts to dance to 'Rock Around the Clock' in a nightclub, explodes with energy and passion. It pushes the director's subtle thesis on the insidiously alluring nature of Western culture and capitalism, and it's perhaps the film's most moving moment, even though the intention might not be there. These amazing moments aside, it's hard not to think that this film needed a little less cold and a little more war. **DAVID JENKINS**



Cheap Thrills: In Praise of The Evil Dead

On the envelope-pushing effects work of Sam Raimi's hand-tooled gorefest, set for re-release this Halloween.


During his formative years, Sam Raimi spent much of his time making amateur Super-8 films with childhood friend Bruce Campbell. Raimi had just turned 20 when, in late 1979, shooting began on his feature debut, *The Evil Dead*. He and Campbell raised the budget themselves, begging friends, family and anyone who would listen, with only the \$1,600 prototype short *Within the Woods* to establish the credibility of their intent. The total outlay initially came in at \$90,000, though it would eventually reach \$350,000, accounting for post-production and marketing. What followed was, by all accounts, an arduous six-week shoot in and around an abandoned cabin during the Tennessee midwinter, with long hours, primitive facilities, multiple injuries, dwindling funds and frozen equipment that would have to be thawed at the derelict building's fireplace.

The rest, as they say, is history. As well as bringing in a healthy return on investment (\$29.4 million at the box office), *The Evil Dead* has variously been praised by Stephen King, vilified by Mary Whitehouse, cut to ribbons and banned in several countries (incredibly, until as recently as 2016 in Germany); it has become a home-video best seller, spawned multiple sequels (both official and unofficial), a remake, a musical, a TV spinoff series, video games and comic-book crossovers; it has secured lasting careers for Raimi and Campbell, and a permanent place for itself in popular culture. It is now frequently recognised as one of the all-time best entries in the horror canon.

This passage from tiny indie production to genre classic is partly down to Raimi's great ambition and energy as a filmmaker who, instead of allowing a lack of funds to get in the way of his vision, let necessity be the mother of invention. His frequent use of heavily canted angles, shooting characters and their environment from seemingly every which way except dead-on, brings a (crucially affordable) sense of skew-whiff unease to the film's visual style. Unwilling to restrict himself to tripod or handheld shots – the defaults for low-budget filmmaking – Raimi improvised cheap alternatives to expensive rigs, all in the service of

ensuring that *The Evil Dead* looked a whole lot better than its modest budget promised.

Cabin-in-the-woods was born of camera-on-the-wood: a dolly cam effect was realised by slathering vaseline on a plank of wood and literally sliding the camera along it; the effect of a 'low mode' steadicam, recently developed and popularised in Stanley Kubrick's big-budget *The Shining*, was simulated by having two operators run along on either side of a two-by-four on which the camera had been mounted. The opening, disembodied 'track' across a misty lake's surface was created by Campbell, in the water, pushing a dinghy in which Raimi held the camera. For the final shot, the camera was fixed to a speeding bike. It was precisely because these 'shaky cam' shots never came close to achieving the smoothness of genuine steadicam that they evoke the POV of something otherworldly, beyond not only the sightline, but also the experience, of the viewer.

Of course, what is good for the viewer need not be good for the cast. The cheap, thick contact lenses used to give the characters a demonic appearance took 10 minutes to put in, and could only be worn for 15 or they would damage the eyes; the dyed karo syrup in which Campbell was regularly spattered took hours to remove. Towards the end, the practical effects that show two characters melting on-screen are very obviously claymation. Yet Raimi has three techniques which he deploys together to help his viewer overlook the cracks and seams in some of his more obviously bargain-basement effects work. First, there is the punchy pace of Edna Ruth Paul's editing (with assistance from a young Joel Coen), which never gives viewers breathing space to dwell too long on anything. Second, there is the sheer relentlessness of the blood and gore that Raimi throws at the screen, stunning us into submission. Third, there is Raimi's finest special effect: Campbell himself, whose jutting jaw, corny line delivery and matinee-idol looks bring a brand of old world charm to proceedings that makes any matte-painted full moon or smoke machine miasma just seem part of the film's self-conscious stylisation. 



The Children Act

Directed by

RICHARD EYRE

Starring

EMMA THOMPSON

STANLEY TUCCI

FIONN WHITEHEAD

Released

24 AUGUST

3

ANTICIPATION.

A welcome lead for Emma Thompson, but another Ian McEwan adaptation so soon?

3

ENJOYMENT.

Sharp, smart and well-executed, though a misplaced Stanley Tucci feels wasted.

3

IN RETROSPECT.

A gentle reminder that Thompson belongs in the spotlight, as her performance burns out long after the film does.

Author Ian McEwan is a master when it comes to exploring the complexities of sex – its pressures, pains and consequences. He has recently adapted two of his novels into screenplays; *On Chesil Beach*, released earlier this year, and now *The Children Act*. In both, McEwan uses sex – specifically sexual dismissal – as a force for change.

In the former, directed by Dominic Cooke, Saoirse Ronan's privileged, intelligent Florence rejects marital sex as a means of claiming her sexual identity. In *The Children Act*, sex has been lacking in the lengthy marriage between High Court judge Fiona (Emma Thompson) and Jack (Stanley Tucci) for 11 months. To Fiona, a respected member of her field, this concern has either been ignored or unnoticed. Jack, meanwhile, deems this situation reasonable grounds for starting an affair with another woman. It's a suggestion he puts to his wife as a last resort, forcing her to see the failings in their relationship for the first time.

Jack leaves to pursue a striking blonde – meanwhile Fiona picks up a high profile case involving Adam (Fionn Whitehead), a 17-year-old Jehovah's Witness whose parents are denying him a life-saving blood transfusion. McEwan works hard to ensure that his characters are likeable and layered. There's a level of self-righteousness to all parties redolent of motor-mouthed film and TV scribe, Aaron Sorkin; the husband is lonely, the wife, though emanating silky professionalism, is quietly vulnerable. As her marriage tapers off into the unknown, Fiona ditches her conventional practice and goes to see Adam in hospital, a visit which compels her to consider her decision beyond the courtroom.

As she reaches for the guitar at the end of Adam's bed and the pair sing a duet, you find yourself grateful for the casting of Thompson and Whitehead, who manage to keep us invested in such potentially cringeworthy moments.

Where *The Children Act* falls short is in the casting of Tucci as the largely absent husband. Such is his endearing screen presence that it's hard not to crave a meatier part for him to rival Thompson. Instead, he plays second fiddle, and to unrewarding effect. For Thompson, however, this is a fine role. The ambiguity teased out by Fiona's relationship with a much younger man leaves her room to tantalise, though purely for the viewer's pleasure as the character is painfully consumed by her actions. Whether it's a maternal bond that ties her to Adam, or that he views her as his entire world, Fiona is nevertheless torn between loneliness and decency, with Thompson effortlessly pulling the strings.

Director Richard Eyre, who addressed similar, albeit more sinister, themes in his 2006 film *Notes on a Scandal*, ushers us into Fiona's world of privilege before he rocks it – only slightly at first, then more sharply as this strange relationship deepens. Although Adam may not be the most authentic characterisation of a teenager (McEwan's biggest flaw seems to be in his skewed, older person's perception of youth), Whitehead performs with an erratic energy that manifests itself as a surprising sense of unease. Expect a shot of suspense, then, in a seemingly by-the-book romantic drama, with an electric lead performance from Thompson.

BETH WEBB



A Sicilian Ghost Story

Directed by

**FABIO GRASSADONIA
ANTONIO PIAZZA**

Starring

**JULIA JEDLIKOWSKA
GAETANO FERNANDEZ
CORINNE MUSALLARI**

Released

3 AUGUST

3

ANTICIPATION.

Not usually convinced by ghost stories.

2

ENJOYMENT.

Grim and mean.

2

IN RETROSPECT.

Lovers of magical realism may wish to seek this one out.

The title of Fabio Grassadonia and Antonio Piazza's second feature tells only half the story. Where their sly 2013 debut *Salvo* artfully turned the traditional gangster epic on its head into something small and intimate, their new film has a scope and scale that belies the supernatural chamber piece implied by the title.

The film opens on 12-year-old Luna (Julia Jedlikowska) as she tries to figure out the best way to tell her classmate Giuseppe (Gaetano Fernandez) that she's in love with him. Not that he doesn't know it already – walking home together after school, the pair flirt as they have done many times before. But today, Luna is finally ready to confess everything, to do it all properly with a handwritten love letter. The handsome Giuseppe gives the enterprising girl a kiss, then leaves for what should be a minute. He never returns.

As the story unfolds and Luna ceaselessly looks for her lover, it becomes clear that she has more than a teenage crush on him – their connection seems almost mystical. Indeed, far from a straightforward teen movie, the film evolves in a decidedly magical realist style. Even before Giuseppe disappears, there is a peculiar atmosphere to their romantic walk in the woods. Wide-angle shots create an ominous sense of danger, as does the frightening dog that pursues the young children before shredding Giuseppe's backpack to pieces. Stranger still are the POV shots from someone or something invisible looking at the children, gliding between the trees. Could it be the spectre of the film's title?

This style, however, quickly becomes tiresome. Luna is understandably enraged by the fact that no one seems to care about Giuseppe's disappearance, but her unrelenting anger also permeates the film's aesthetic, rendering it humourless, serious in the extreme, even spiteful. Every character is a source of disappointment for Luna; her mother an unambiguous villain. Without offering even a fleeting moment of respite, *A Sicilian Ghost Story* often feels heavy and stifling, and against its misanthropic backdrop the girl's passionate quest looks more like teenage rebellion than justified frustration. The intelligently structured story, as well as the striking cinematography from Luca Bigazzi (best known for his frequent collaborations with Italian filmmaker Paolo Sorrentino), feel ultimately wasted on a disappointingly juvenile and superficial project.

What drives the film forward isn't the mystery around Giuseppe's disappearance – its circumstances are revealed early on – but whether he can be saved. We eventually discover what happened, and the young boy's stark situation is shown in parallel to Luna's. Waiting for her, daydreaming about her, the boy slowly loses his mind. While this horror gives Luna reason for being so worried about him, the way in which the film seems to employ the violence it condemns as an excuse for its own general misanthropy remains troubling throughout. A post-film payoff – another justification – brings us back to reality from this magical realist aesthetic with an enervating thud.

ELENA LAZIC



Columbus

Directed by
KOGONADA

Starring
JOHN CHO
HALEY LU RICHARDSON
PARKER POSEY

Released
5 OCTOBER

3

ANTICIPATION.

'Architectural drama' isn't exactly a scintillating prospect.

4

ENJOYMENT.

Aesthetically pleasing even if the narrative is a little shaky.

3

IN RETROSPECT.

Imperfect, but more than enough to put Kogonada on the map.

The city of Columbus, Indiana is only home to around 45,000 residents, but since the mid-1950s it has become a strange Promised Land for architecture enthusiasts. Featuring some fine examples of early Modernist public spaces, it makes for a beguiling setting in video essayist Kogonada's debut feature. Although best known for his explorations of other directors' work, here Kogonada opts to tell an original story. John Cho plays Jin, a Korean-American translator who reluctantly travels to the titular town after his estranged architect father falls ill during a lecture tour. Bored and frustrated by his unscheduled pit-stop, he befriends the directionless library assistant Casey (Haley Lu Richardson), who is torn between leaving home and pursuing her passion for architecture, or staying behind to care for her mother.

While this premise alone is a little old hat, there is something decidedly earnest about Kogonada's film. The sleepy city is bathed in warm sunlight and then cool downpours as time drags on, revealing Columbus as the still point of the turning universe for Jin and Casey. Their friendship is gradual but tender, imbued with long, reflective silences and awkward jokes that push the limits of their recent acquaintance – one unexpected highlight sees Jin attempt, in a roundabout way, to ask if Casey's mother is a former drug addict. It's pleasing to see Cho – who for so long has been cast in underwritten roles – given a chance to shine. He plays Jin with palpable world-weariness, but also an endearing inelegance that allows you to

believe he's a real person. Haley Lu Richardson as Casey is equally well cast, bringing a bright spark of energy to the role and providing the perfect foil to the straight-laced Jin. As stylised as the buildings are around them, there's a sense that Jin and Casey come from a very real place, and it's easy to empathise with their personal struggles – yet they subvert the cinematic odd couple trope by being so refreshingly normal, even in their differences.

Given Kogonada's background as a film academic and video essayist, it's no surprise that the real strength of *Columbus* comes from its visuals. The film is filled with shots that capture beauty and brutality in the town's famous construction, and one particularly compelling scene between Jin and his father's assistant, Eleanor (a mysterious and elegant Parker Posey), is framed entirely within two mirrors in a hotel room. A sense of being tethered to a location by a sense of duty translates into a slow pace, with much of the film's driving action taking place in the final 20 minutes or so. This is slightly jarring given the film's minimalist aesthetic.

Columbus feels like a love letter to this unique locale, but not so much as to isolate viewers unfamiliar with the location – rather, Kogonada seems interested in the details of what connects people to places. Casey falls into the role of Jin's personal tour guide as the pair meander between the town's construction curiosities, comparing notes on fraught parental relationships and trading architecture anecdotes. For capturing a rare sort of intimacy on screen, Kogonada has proven himself one to watch. **HANNAH WOODHEAD**



Kogonada

The renowned video essayist discusses his consummately constructed debut feature, *Columbus*.

Kogonada made a name for himself with meditative, unassuming video essays on the likes of Wes Anderson, Stanley Kubrick and Yasujirō Ozu. *Columbus* premiered at Sundance in 2017, and it sees him step beyond the cutting room with an assured directorial debut that ruminates on the walls, empty spaces and the work of mid-century modernist architects on matters of the heart.

LWLies: Before making *Columbus* the film, how did you first encounter the ‘modernist mecca’ of Columbus the city? Kogonada: I took my family and we stopped there and immediately I felt really moved by it. There seemed to be a story within the town itself. At the time I was working on very broad structures of a film that was going to be about parents and children – really the burden that children feel in regard to their parents. After just a few hours there I realised this is where the film needs to be.

As well as architecture, you link the characters Casey and Jin through their shared experiences


of parental absence. Personally, my parents were getting older and my father-in-law had recently passed away, which was really hard for my wife. He was one of her best friends, so we both felt the absence of a parent. On the other side I have two young boys who are getting older – they’re still 10 and 11 but I’m aware that my time with them is very short.

And that exploration of absence in *Jin and Casey* is reflected in the buildings themselves. For sure, I knew that *Columbus* wasn’t just going to be a part of the background. I had this hunch that there was some relationship between the promise of modernism and the limits of that movement. The construction of emptiness, the construction of absence that the architecture can make you aware of. It can take this invisible thing that’s always in front of us, which is space itself, and frame it, making absence something worthy of seeing.

The absence of space within the buildings mirrors Jin’s father, who is a looming figure over the film, but we never really see him. The father looms large for Jin but we would have to feel that in the absence of him. I knew that was going to be an aesthetic strategy for me: what viewers didn’t have access to and the way that absence is filled by the viewer, what it contributes and what it limits. As a little kid I was haunted by the possibility of not existing or people I love not existing and part of me growing up is contending with it and embracing it and finding meaning in it, as opposed to meaninglessness in it. I also thought that when we meet people, we are somehow defined by our

parents, but we almost never meet the parents of the people we talk to about them. We’re aware of them through these conversations, we’re aware of them because we see the way they’ve been affected by them.

Did your work as an editor influence your work as a writer and director? I was always aware of what I was going to have to do in the cutting room and it really let me make decisions on the spot. There were certain things that, because they were on the spot, I didn’t know exactly how they would work out. Then in the edit there were definitely scenes that I started cutting or removing that I didn’t think I was going to remove, because they were taking away from the film, or unnecessary. I was constantly thinking as an editor and for me that’s where the cooking is done. Everything else is just getting the best ingredients you can, but I knew that we were going to cook with them, so it was about figuring out what I’m going to have in the kitchen at the end of the day.

***Columbus* debuted at the Sundance Film Festival in January, 2017. Is it strange to still be talking about the film?** I think my entrance into cinema was – as a viewer, as someone who has been altered by it, who loves to talk about and obsess over films – always with the dream of being part of that conversation in larger ways. When you make a movie and you bring it out to the world, there’s a part of me – that maybe has to do with my own shyness – that feels like it’s too audacious to talk about your own film too much, even though that’s all you’ve ever dreamed about 



The Wife

Directed by

BJÖRN RUNGE

Starring

GLENN CLOSE

JOHNATHAN PRYCE

CHRISTIAN SLATER

Released

28 SEPTEMBER

3

ANTICIPATION.

A brilliant cast, but does the title hide more than a perfunctory story of a frustrated spouse?

4

ENJOYMENT.

A smart critique of the perverse ways in which society diminishes women.

4

IN RETROSPECT.

An intelligent drama that treats its disempowered heroine with the respect she deserves.

Joseph Castleman (Jonathan Pryce) is the first to admit that without his wife Joan (Glenn Close), he never would have become the talented and renowned writer he is today. As Björn Runge's *The Wife* opens, its protagonist is in his sixties, with many well-praised books under his belt. When Joseph gets a call announcing that he has won the Nobel Prize for Literature, it's only natural that Joan should listen in on the other phone and that she should be the first person he thanks in his speech in Stockholm. Whether she likes it or not.

Today's cinema landscape is pretty barren when it comes to presenting talented actors in the midst of deep conversation. Where such scenes do exist, they tend to act as breathers between action sequences where the performers are often ghosts of themselves, hidden behind CGI. Runge's film, therefore, has the competitive advantages of a dramatic premise and a first-rate cast. Joan muffles a secret which Joe pretends doesn't exist, while Christian Slater's writer Nathaniel persistently confronts the couple, hoping that his upcoming biography of Joe will be even more juicy for it. This complex ballet of the unspoken allows the cast to really let rip – Slater and Close in particular share some deliciously ambiguous moments of tension, sexual or otherwise. Their closeness hints at an impossible *Dangerous Liaison*.

Close seems to be returning to the archetype of the deceptively serene woman, and although Joan is less manipulative than her Marquise de Merteuil in Stephen Frears' 1988 masterpiece, and more collected than bunny-boiler Alex Forrest in *Fatal Attraction*, she

too refuses to be ignored. Joe's prestigious recognition sparks in her a wave of recollections, tracing back from her first meeting with him when he was her teacher of creative writing in 1958. Their history is revealed to be increasingly complex, which saves these flashbacks from the usual trappings of cheap period piece nostalgia. Add the fact that the couple's first names are so similar and it all begins to feel like an ominous sign. Ambition, a shared passion for writing, love and misogyny all coalesce to reveal a darker reality that progressively colours and illuminates Close's enigmatic performance. There is more pain to this compassionate partner than meets the eye, but also more intelligence and strength. This understanding of Joan as a woman who made a calculated choice rather than a victim is what makes *The Wife* more than a sad story of male entitlement.

Nathaniel too recognises Joan as the more interesting member of the Castleman team, and Slater, with his trademark seductive sleaze, is perfectly primed to turn this frustrated author into a more appealing character. It is the impressive construction of Jane Anderson's script, adapted from the 2003 novel by Meg Wolitzer, that grants each protagonist a similar, slowly revealed complexity. Each new conversation and revealed memory is a layer uncovered, leading up to a satisfying explosion of words. Yet even that resolution hides another, culminating in a perplexing twist that nevertheless feels right. Life for Joan has been a succession of compromises, and whether she will keep the memory of them all to herself will continue to be her choice and her choice alone. Therein lies her power. **MANUELA LAZIC**



The Rider

Directed by

CHLOÉ ZHAO

Starring

BRADY JANDREAU

TIM JANDREAU

LILLY JANDREAU

Released

14 SEPTEMBER

4

ANTICIPATION.

Plaudits aplenty from the festival circuit. Excited for this one.

4

ENJOYMENT.

A remarkable film in many respects, and Zhao works wonders with a non-professional cast.

3

IN RETROSPECT.

The story errs a little on the side of moralism and sentimentality.

A man rises up from a bed with a bandage wrapped around his head. There's a little island of blood and pus which has soaked up through the fabric. Without so much as flinching, he cuts away the dressing with a knife to reveal track-like staples running like a crescent above his right ear. This is Brady (Brady Jandreau, playing a lightly-fictionalised version of himself), a Zen-like Dakotan rodeo ace who is lucky to be alive having been stomped on by a wild horse that got the better of him in the ring. He appears remarkably chilled about what is clearly a dire situation, his first order of business being to skip the bed rest that doctors have urged him to take and get back to lasso practice.

Chloé Zhao's *The Rider* is a wistful ode to a lost America and to the folks who remain pointedly out of synch with the steady march of progress. Brady's dilemma is a pertinent one: does he risk life and limb to do the thing he loves, or does he get into boring lockstep with the traditional capitalist system? His dependents include a younger sister with learning difficulties (Lilly Jandreau) and a father with a gambling problem, for whom he dearly wants to provide. He shows no sorrow when visiting his old rodeo buddy Lane, now paralysed and unable to speak. They hoot along to online videos of the glory days, refusing to believe they won't someday be back on a bucking bronco despite their severe injuries.

Zhao's restraint is admirable, but there's a sense that the film is surging towards an inevitable end point where Brady will be forced to choose between a probably painful death and happiness, or life

and eternal disappointment. And if there's any criticism here, it's that this tried-and-tested story arc doesn't really offer potential for big surprises. From the first five minutes of footage, you can guess exactly where this one is going to go. Yet the film is blessed with a number of magical sequences, usually when Zhao's documentary instinct kicks in and she just observes as Brady weaves his equine magic. Sometimes that's just nattering to Lilly against the half-light, detailing the bright future he has promised her. Other times it involves his various interactions with horses which channel an aching desire to be cantering across the prairies once more. Two sequences show Brady breaking in some rowdy colts, and the wizardry he performs is presented on the level of intricate brain surgery. It's almost as if he is silently communing with the animals and benignly bending them to his will. To complete the transaction, he needs to just hop on their back and ride them around the pen, but he knows his body can't take it any more.

While Brady blindly romanticises the ways of the Old West and the flinty demands of manhood, Zhao largely dismisses it all as macho bullshit. The film is about Brady developing a sense of his own mortality, and not being able to work with horses is, for him, its own type of slow death. In the end, Zhao suggests that only by living will we discover new possibilities, new hopes and new turns in the road. There are so many individual moments here that are brilliant, and you might want to bet your life savings that this amazing director will deliver her first masterpiece sooner rather than later. **DAVID JENKINS**



The Heiresses

Directed by **MARCELO MARTINESSI**

Starring **ANA BRUN, MARGARITA IRÚN, ANA IVANOVA**

Released **10 AUGUST**

When it premiered at the Berlin Film Festival earlier in 2018, a quiet buzz enveloped Marcelo Martinessi's debut feature, *The Heiresses*. This seems fitting, given that everything about the film is similarly understated, including Ana Brun's bittersweet lead performance as Chela, which won her the Silver Bear for Best Actress. A relationship drama that's light on drama, *The Heiresses* follows two ailing beneficiaries in Asunción, Paraguay, who are completely devoted to each other. Martinessi's decision to focus on an older female character in a same-sex relationship is pleasingly nuanced – their relationship is tender and matter-of-fact.

When the gregarious Chiquita (Margarita Irún) is incarcerated after incurring various debts, Chela is forced back into the world she retreated from long ago. Light on cash and looking for a distraction, she sets up an impromptu taxi service, ferrying her older sister's wealthy friends to and from their weekly card games. Although she's had to sell off her home piece by piece in order to fund her partner's legal counsel, she is reluctant to part with her beloved car – it grants her a new sense of freedom, hinting at the terrifying notion that possibilities still wait beyond her front door.

There's an exceptional gentleness about Martinessi's work, where glassy indifference of the wealthy contrasts from an overcrowded noisy prison, where Chiquita's friendships are currency, bought and sold for the price of a cigarette. Chela seems at once vulnerable and distant as she watches wordlessly while her prized possessions are offered up for sale, picked over by wealthy acquaintances, vultures at her living wake. The insecurities of ageing and growing old alone are writ large in this delicate character portrait, but there's a lot of hope present. As Chela ventures out into the world again, she learns to stand on her own two feet. **HANNAH WOODHEAD**

ANTICIPATION. *Not exactly sure what this is going to be.*

3

ENJOYMENT. *Ana Brun's tender lead performance is something to behold.*

4

IN RETROSPECT. *An empathetic and assured debut from Marcelo Martinessi.*

4



Lucky

Directed by **JOHN CARROLL LYNCH**

Starring **HARRY DEAN STANTON, DAVID LYNCH, RON LIVINGSTON**

Released **14 SEPTEMBER**

Harry Dean Stanton, in his final screen role, plays the eponymous Lucky, a cigarette-smoking, coffee-drinking loner happily making his way through life. His daily routine starts with yoga before breakfast at his local diner, followed by a course of game shows in the afternoon. He shares a few pleasantries here and there with the inhabitants of the small New Mexico town where he lives, and frequents his local watering hole with his friend Howard (David Lynch). He's a man who has trimmed his life down to the bare essentials, and seems profoundly happy because of it.

While Lucky doesn't talk all that much, what he does say reveals a great deal about his character. A discussion around realism reveals him to be an atheist, far more interested in Bloody Marys than Hail Marys. Screenwriters Drago Sumonja and Logan Sparks avoid the temptation to over-complicate the plot – when Lucky falls at home it is almost set up as a turning point, until Lucky's doctor (Ed Begley Jr in a hilarious cameo) finds himself perplexed by his patient's good health.

As an actor, John Carroll Lynch has worked with Martin Scorsese and David Fincher, but rather than attempt to ape these esteemed filmmakers, he has created a gently-paced and refined feature of his own style. Crucially, he always keeps the focus on Lucky. There are no long, sweeping shots through the town, no set pieces to distract the viewer. Lynch simply films one of the greatest actors of his generation doing his thing. Meanwhile, David Lynch – always a treat in front of the camera – puts in a strong shift as Howard, delivering perhaps the most poignant turtle-related tale ever committed to film. But this is undoubtedly Stanton's show, a powerful swansong from an enduring screen icon. **LUKE WALKLEY**

ANTICIPATION. *John Carroll Lynch's debut feature created plenty of buzz on the festival circuit.*

4

ENJOYMENT. *Snappy dialogue, dry humour and odd relationships come together in splendid fashion.*

4

IN RETROSPECT. *Harry Dean Stanton's parting gift to cinema is an absolute masterclass in character acting.*

4



Upgrade

Directed by **LEIGH WHANNELL**
Starring **LOGAN MARSHALL-GREEN, BETTY GABRIEL, HARRISON GILBERTSON**
Released **31 AUGUST**

The second film (after 2015's *Insidious: Chapter 3*) to be written and directed by Leigh Whannell, *Upgrade* opens with a contradiction. After the names of the film's various production companies, and even its title, are read out in a Siri-like voice to the accompaniment of CG imagery, we see Grey Trace (Logan Marshall-Green) working on the motor of a classic Firebird Trans Am.

It is the future, but Grey surrounds himself with the pre-computer detritus of the 20th century – an analogue man in a digital age. When a gang shoots his wife (Melanie Vallejo) dead and leaves him a paraplegic, our Luddite protagonist has an experimental implant attached to his spine by cybernetics genius Eron (Harrison Gilbertson) and finds himself occupying a Grey area between his own human consciousness and the high-tech system (named STEM, and voiced by Simon Maiden) now coordinating his bodily actions.

This is, at least initially, a revenge-driven action film, as Grey goes after the men (themselves bionically enhanced) who ruined his life, and discovers that STEM can do things with his body that he could never himself do before. As a consequence, the fight sequences are refreshingly odd in their conception, with Grey an awkward puppet to his own kickass moves. Yet Whannell's film also brings a technological upgrade to Robert Louis Stevenson's 'Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde', as the hybrid Grey becomes ever more conflicted with himself in a struggle for control as much internal as external.

Marshall-Green's oft-noticed resemblance to the star of Marvel's forthcoming *Venom* means that *Upgrade* is one of two films released this year that will see a Tom Hardy-like hero doing battle with his other half. In one way or another, though, it is Whannell's film that is the singularity. **ANTON BITEL**

ANTICIPATION. *Leigh Whannell doing action? Count us in.*

4

ENJOYMENT.
He's also doing meat/tech dualism.

4

IN RETROSPECT. *Mind-body, action-SF, man-machine split.*

3



Under the Wire

Directed by **CHRISTOPHER MARTIN**
Starring **PAUL CONROY, WA'EL, EDITH BOUVIER**
Released **7 SEPTEMBER**

Is it possible to look on as the world burns around you and feel nothing? Few could watch with emotional objectivity as a woman fails to recognise her own grandson, mutilated by a bomb blast. The camera distinguishes itself from what is human, an unthinking eye recording brute facts. Paul Conroy, the photographer partner of esteemed war journalist Marie Colvin, thinks the atrocities he has seen have habituated him to such devastating scenes. As this striking documentary on his time in Syria progresses, the tears in his eyes betray his true feelings.

Under the Wire is, in concept, a documentary about Colvin in the weeks before she was killed by an explosion in February 2012. Her story comes to rest on Conroy's charismatic narration to his seemingly endless supply of footage, recalling nauseating crawls through cramped tunnels and the horrors of a Syrian hospital. Constantly focusing on the wider onslaught, the loss of Colvin is blurred into the background.

Her relentless devotion to "tell the world" what was happening in the Baba Amr district sustains Conroy's ability to return to his own traumatic past. Director Christopher Martin closes in on his battle-scarred expression, making for a more evocative study than his 2013 memoir. Regrettably, the poignancy of his message is undermined by cheap stylistic shorthands, intercutting footage of torchlight with staged shots of overflowing ashtrays and flashing sirens. Accompanied by the plods and thumps of Glenn Gregory and Berenice Scott's score, the artificial tension distracts from the terrifying consequences at stake. When tackling this fear, the film strikes the chord it aims for. Moments of real desperation in human faces reveal why journalists risk death to report in Syria and beyond, providing a timely reflection on the power of documentary footage. A pity, then, that Martin does not leave their story to stand for itself. **LILLIAN CRAWFORD**

ANTICIPATION. *A personal reflection on Marie Colvin could be interesting.*

3

ENJOYMENT.
One could listen to Paul Conroy for hours.

4

IN RETROSPECT. *Their experience deserves a better film than this.*

3



Tehran Taboo

Directed by
ALI SOOZANDEH

Starring
ELMIRA RAFIZADEH
ZAHRA AMIR EBRAHIMI
ARASH MARANDI

Released
5 OCTOBER

3

ANTICIPATION.

Iranian animation has an impressive recent track record.

4

ENJOYMENT.

An engrossing story and characters, depicted in a visually stunning manner.

4

IN RETROSPECT.

A striking debut feature from Soozandeh. Very excited to see what he comes up with next.

As its title suggests, Ali Soozandeh's *Tehran Taboo* explores various issues in modern-day Iranian society – issues that are myriad, complex and not commonly discussed within the country. Specifically, the film looks at the sexual restrictions placed upon those living in the eponymous capital city, especially those which apply first and foremost to women.

Having left his homeland for Germany 23 years ago, Soozandeh is one of the few Iranian filmmakers working today with a decent measure of creative freedom, operating as he does outside of the strict censorship laws imposed by the state. Soozandeh, who previously made his name as an animator on Ali Samadi Ahadi's 2010 documentary *The Green Wave*, about Iran's so-called 'Green Revolution', certainly makes the most of this opportunity, creating an eye-opening and often harrowing depiction of middle class life in the city.

The film principally follows the lives of four people: Pari (Elmira Rafizadeh), a mother forced into prostitution; Sara (Zahra Amir Ebrahimi), her pregnant neighbour; and Babak and Donya (Arash Marandi and Negar Mona Alizadeh), a young couple who are shown having sex at a nightclub. The respective arcs of these characters become intertwined over the course of the film's 90-minute run time, as each encounters different challenges arising from the repressive society in which they live.

Tehran Taboo was made using rotoscoping, a technique combining animation and live action

where motion capture footage is shot and then traced over to create an animated effect. This proved to be an inspired decision. Of course, it does mean that some of the realism is lost, but this is not necessarily a bad thing. Instead of exposing viewers to an unfiltered view of what is an inescapably bleak social environment, Soozandeh depicts the complex real-world issues facing the residents of Iran's capital city with striking and vibrant imagery. A stunning colour palette, coupled with people and places that feel nothing if not authentic, makes for an effective blend of fantasy and reality.

The opening scene, in which Pari is shown performing sexual acts on a taxi driver while her mute son sits in the back seat, is particularly arresting. But thanks largely to a strong script that serves up a compelling narrative and empathetic characters, the film manages to avoid excessive political hand-wringing. Its message is clear, yet for every shocking scene of a prostitute working in front of her child or a cat being clubbed to death in the street, Soozandeh shows us children playing, mothers laughing and other images of everyday human compassion.

That being said, *Tehran Taboo* occasionally feels a little contrived in the way it communicates various social issues. While these messages often fit seamlessly into the plot, there are times when Soozandeh takes us out of the story momentarily. Nevertheless, in a film that is clearly striving to make an impact in Iran, placing greater emphasis on the social commentary aspect of the story is perhaps a necessary means to an end. **FINLEY CREBOLDER**



Ali Soozandeh

The Iranian-born German animator of *Tehran Taboo* offers a window into his world.

Ali Soozandeh left his native Iran to move to Germany when he was 25. His debut feature, *Tehran Taboo*, is a rotoscope animation exploring the sexual and gender restrictions facing the citizens of Iran's capital.

LWLies: Your film really opened my eyes to a lot of issues I wasn't very aware of. Soozandeh: I wanted to write a story about my own experiences. I grew up in Iran and lived there for 25 years. Thinking of my past, especially my teens, I find myself asking questions like: Why are there so many restrictions in Iran's society? How did this change our lives and shape our character? Why is it a taboo to talk about things in public? Making this film, I wanted to answer those questions. I think if everybody asks themselves the same questions, we can start a dialogue and maybe even find a solution.

A lot of the film is seen through the eyes of a mute child. Why? The child is our lens. Being mute he cannot share the secrets of the other characters, so they trust him and tell him things. We can know and understand other characters better through him.


You mentioned that you lived in Iran until your twenties... Yes, I lived there for 25 years, maybe 24 years. I have lived here in Germany for 23 years. I came to Germany in 1995.

How much influence did your experiences during those 25 years have on the film? The story is partly my own experience and partly everything I have heard and seen directly or indirectly. When I started to write the script, I interviewed a lot of Iranian people who lived in Iran and came to Europe, like students or business people or refugees. I'd watch a lot of clips on YouTube. I'd read a lot of blogs written by Iranian people too, so I could compare my own experiences with everything I read, heard or saw. It is a fictional story of course, it is not a documentary about Iranian society. We didn't want to make a statement about Iranian society.

How much do you think attitudes have changed there since you left? I think that the internet has changed many things in Iran. Before, we had no contact to the people outside Iran in other countries, but now everybody knows how life is outside Iran, and it changes things, especially for young people. But the restrictions are the same, especially the sexual restrictions, you know? Iranian society is a very high contrast society, depending on where you are you can find a great difference in environments around you. North of Tehran is a very rich district with big houses and private swimming pools. South of Tehran you'll find a lot of poor districts coloured by religion and tradition. In the north nobody will ask a woman if she is a virgin before she gets married, in the south, they do. I think

we cannot really talk about the general situation in Iran, we need to talk in depth about this issue. The most important thing is the film takes place in a part of Iranian society – it is not a statement about the whole society.

You've said in previous interviews that you hope your film might change these attitudes. How much difference do you think any film can really make? I think that film, or generally art, cannot really give society the solution. Art or film can ask the audience the questions, the same questions I ask myself: What is my role in the society? Why do I play this game? If everyone asks themselves the same questions, they can start to change themselves, and in the long term, really change society.

Why did you decide to make the film using rotoscope animation? We couldn't shoot in Tehran because of film restrictions. You need a lot of permission from the culture minister, and it wasn't possible for us. Of course, we could shoot in other cities, but I think it doesn't really work because you cannot really fake a city. For Western eyes it is no different, but if you are Iranian you can see the difference. That's why we decided to use animation, and after that we started to test different techniques like hand drawn characters and puppet animation but none of them were really good, because I think that we needed a touch of reality in the animation technique. It isn't a story for children, it must be acceptable for an adult audience, and rotoscope gave us this chance to make the animation much more acceptable for an adult audience 



Distant Constellation

Directed by
SHEVAUN MIZRAHI
Released
17 AUGUST

3

ANTICIPATION.

Arrives via the cutting edge of the American indie film festival circuit: True/False and BAMcinemaFest.

4

ENJOYMENT.

A rich experience – and not an especially tough sit.

4

IN RETROSPECT.

But maybe it should be?

The corner of the sky under which the stars of *Distant Constellation* are dying is Istanbul, in a retirement home dimly illuminated by cold fluorescent lighting, flickering television sets and fading memories. Outside the windows, a massive construction project is underway, though it's currently nothing but a pit, which only some of the film's subjects, surely, will live to see filled in. Though the two spaces of Shevaun Mizrahi's documentary are sealed off from one another, the multipronged symbolism is unmistakable: a literally concrete reminder of time's forward-flowing relentlessness, built by a waxing generation as a waning generation watches.

Mizrahi's first film, shot over several years as the American filmmaker visited her father's native Turkey, is about all the big existential stuff, though a further step back from the void than Frederick Wiseman's *Near Death* or Allan King's *Dying at Grace*. It's primarily a meditation on memory, at the moment when memory is all the individual has left. Mizrahi's circumscribed scope gives the film focus and density. We never see any caretakers, relatives or trips outside, and she allows a few subjects to grow into portraits that give a sense of the fullness of life, inflamed or blinking in and out erratically – a characterful variety of emotion, which gains gravitas from the way it's inevitably shaded by regret or fearfulness.

One retirement home resident plays piano for Mizrahi and reads to her from his erotic memoirs: "I started to caress her clitoris. My god! Then she had an orgasm." Eventually, the wistful roguishness

of this more-dingy-than-dirty old man gives way to second-childhood neediness in a surprising, somewhat indecent proposal to the young female filmmaker who seems to enjoy listening to him talk.

An older survivor of the Armenian genocide seems to have more mental equilibrium, despite the croaking voice with which she dredges up the story of her family's forced conversion. With her spine curved at an almost 90-degree angle from her waist, she hunches into the camera – even nodding off for a second mid-sentence – and a single tear forms on her otherwise husk-dry face in frame-filling close-up.

Two old men ride the elevator up and down the three-storey building all day, philosophising: one short and voluble, narrating and navigating; the other tall, with a tremor, eager to agree with his friend. They make for a hilarious and tender Mutt and Jeff act, pondering the mysteries of the universe (Is there life after death? Do aliens exist?) and resolving them all with a worldly shrug.

In interstitial scenes, Mizrahi shows us residents doing piecework, puzzles or simply shuffling across the frame with agonising slowness, until the lights go out for the night and we're left to contemplate the swirling snow and howling wind. We never see her subjects get dressed, let alone attend to any other more intimate bodily needs, though we see how easily their skin bruises and how long it takes to heal. Mizrahi films one-on-one interviews with a shallow depth of field, so that her subjects appear with the occluded intensity of their own remembrances. **MARK ASCH**



Mandy

Directed by

PANOS COSMATOS

Starring

NICOLAS CAGE

ANDREA RISEBOROUGH

LINUS ROACHE

Released

OCTOBER



Nicolas Cage is screaming. His face is contorted into a grotesque, Edvard Munch-adjacent portrait of soul-deep pain and anger, so potent that if you close your eyes for a moment, you might be able to taste the bitter metallic tang of the blood streaked across his cheeks and matted in his hair. It's this full-bodied commitment to his craft which has made Cage an enduring presence in Hollywood for some three decades. His performance as Red Miller in Panos Cosmatos' cosmic revenge romp *Mandy* is a testament to this resilience, but also transcends Cage's whirling maniacal trademark performance style to become a different sort of beast.

It's 1983 in the Mojave Desert's Shadow Mountains. Red lives a peaceful life with his partner Mandy (Andrea Riseborough) near Crystal Lake. They while away the hours quietly, until strange dreams start to plague them, foreshadowing something wicked heading their way. When the leader of a violent religious cult takes an interest in Mandy, their rural idyll is shattered, turning a woodland reverie into a blood-soaked vision of Hell on Earth. The aptly named Red swears revenge on those who have wronged him, including the cult's biker minions, who look like they've just walked off the set of an Iron Maiden album cover shoot.

Despite its fairly linear revenge movie plot, Cosmatos' twisted fairy tale – steeped in heavy metal iconography – is quite unlike anything else you're likely to see at the cinema this year. Once the action starts, there's no let-up, no respite. With a hefty dose of ultraviolence in the form of mind-boggling set-pieces

involving battleaxes and chainsaws, *Mandy* has the same stylistic look and feel as Craig S Zahler's recent gore-fests *Bone Tomahawk* and *Brawl in Cell Block 99*, but thematically it's closer to a moodier, LCD-tripping cousin of David Lynch or Jim Jarmusch. The ethereal visual atmosphere sees grainy shots bleed into one another like a reel of film exposed for too long, and shifting red-blue-purple lighting brings to mind the chemical headache of hours spent in a darkroom. Elsewhere, the late, great Jóhann Jóhannsson's brooding score – vastly different from any of his other work – provides a stark reminder of just what a tragedy his loss is for the film world. This, coupled with King Crimson's remarkable track 'Starless' from their 1974 album 'Red', creates an unforgettable acid-trip soundscape that bores into your skull.

When one character remarks to Red, "You exude a cosmic darkness," he isn't lying. Cage's full-tilt performance sees him snort cocaine from a large shard of broken glass and light a cigarette off a decapitated skull, but in fully investing us in Red and Mandy's relationship from the off, Cosmatos marries Cage's knack for mania with his often under-utilised ability to be thoughtful and restrained. It's not so much Peak Cage as Prime Cage. Even those who can't get on board with the film's jarring brutality will be hard-pressed to fault Cosmatos' singular vision – or the incredible sight of Cage hand-forging a weapon he christens 'The Beast'. An unabashed and compelling case for the beauty of genre cinema, *Mandy* will continue to haunt you with its curious blackness even when the swirling, waking nightmare is over.

HANNAH WOODHEAD

4

ANTICIPATION.

Always nice to see what Nicolas Cage is up to.

4

ENJOYMENT.

Dreamy, destructive, unfailingly compelling.

5

IN RETROSPECT.

If this is Hell, send us there.



Directed by
SPIKE LEE

Starring
JOHN DAVID WASHINGTON
ADAM DRIVER
TOPHER GRACE

Released
24 AUGUST

4

ANTICIPATION.

Spike Lee's latest interrogation of racism in America.

4

ENJOYMENT.

"Dis joint is based on some fo' real, fo' real shit."

4

IN RETROSPECT.

Lee's most entertaining and thought-provoking film in years.

BlacKkKlansman

Despite the vital steps taken by activist movements such as Black Lives Matter in response to the persistent and increasingly public slaughter of black people at the hands of predominantly white police officers, it took NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick taking a knee during the national anthem to reignite the conversation around police brutality and racism in the US. It's apt, then, that Spike Lee's sensational new film about a trailblazing black cop features an African-American former football player in the lead role.

In *BlacKkKlansman*, John David Washington stars as detective Ron Stallworth, who early on in the film is described as the "Jackie Robinson of police officers". Like the boundary-breaking baseball icon, Stallworth crossed colour lines at a pivotal time in America's history by becoming the first African-American officer to serve in the Colorado Springs Police Department. Together with his Jewish partner Flip Zimmerman (Adam Driver), Stallworth infiltrated a local chapter of the Ku Klux Klan in the late 1970s, eventually becoming its leader.

Before Stallworth and Zimmerman set to work, Lee kicks things off in searing fashion with what could easily be mistaken for a too-hot-for-TV SNL sketch – Alec Baldwin spewing fire-and-brimstone bigotry as a buttoned-down far-right extremist. This is counterpointed by a rousing speech at a meeting of black students and, later, with contemporary newsreel footage showing peaceful protests marred by violence, as well as public addresses given by the likes of Donald Trump and David Duke. The latter white nationalist is portrayed in the film by Topher

Grace, whose benign, almost boyish image alludes to the fact that racism comes in many guises, and that the greatest threat to liberty and social equality are those who are willing to stoke and exploit people's prejudices for their own political gain.

There is romance and a great deal of humour in the film – at one point Grace's Duke attempts to explain the difference between how a black man and a white man pronounce certain words; another highlight sees the former Grand Wizard on the receiving end of a racial epithet-strewn crank call. In the film's most poignant scene, the veteran singer, screen actor and social activist Harry Belafonte recalls the horrific story of Jesse Washington, a black teenage farmhand who was lynched on the streets of Waco, Texas in 1916 as a baying crowd watched. Elsewhere, clips from *Gone with the Wind* and DW Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* serve as powerful reminders of the long shadow cast by the Confederate flag, which America has yet to step out of, in some quarters more than others.

Lee's astuteness both as a social commentator and a filmmaker lies in his ability to entertain while making you think. In *BlacKkKlansman*, he pays homage to various blaxploitation-era touchstones as a means of celebrating black art and culture, specifically in the context of its emergence and evolution as a form of resistance. He also states in no uncertain terms that America has always been in the business of selling hate. If in doing so Lee succeeds in raising a few laughs, it's only because he speaks the inexorable, painful truth.

ADAM WOODWARD



The Women (1939)

Directed by

GEORGE CUKOR

Starring

NORMA SHEARER

JOAN CRAWFORD

ROSALIND RUSSELL

Released

17 AUGUST

5

ANTICIPATION.

Is one of the funniest films of all time still one of the funniest films of all time?

5

ENJOYMENT.

Yes, it's still one of the funniest films of all time.

5

IN RETROSPECT.

A quietly radical treatise on female camaraderie which is much imitated and never bettered.

Noted playwright, socialite and staunch conservative Clare Boothe Luce had already married and divorced one good-for-nothing man by the time she wrote her 1936 play 'The Women', about Manhattan society mavens and their absent mates. One year prior, she hitched her wagon to husband number two – Henry Robinson Luce, a filthy rich publishing magnate whose properties included *Time*, *Life*, and other middlebrow periodicals targeted toward the commuter class. Sometime between these amalgamations, you can bet sister spent a little time in Reno, Nevada; one of the few places where a woman of means could shamelessly dissolve her happy home.

Per the film's title card, 'The Women' ran for an auspicious 666 performances at New York's Ethel Barrymore Theatre. The subsequent film, adapted for the screen by author Anita Loos and directed by woman-whisperer George Cukor, would have swept the Academy Awards had it not faced stiff competition that year. Epic-ish in length, with more bitches than a Westminster Kennel Club show, there was nothing quite like *The Women* at the time of its release. Although men are the absolute nucleus of the film's plot, one sees neither hide nor hair of them on-screen. Even one-sided phone calls are devoid of those telltale, garbled baritones – instead, husbands and lovers exist merely as topics of speculation, derision and desire.

Set in the beauty salons, supper clubs and department stores that make up the characters' natural habitat, the rules of engagement between principal players Mary (Norma Shearer's married socialite with

a straying husband) and Crystal (Joan Crawford's conniving shopgirl who's stolen said husband), are on a silky, but hardly soft, playing field.

Without gender as a differentiator, it is class and status that become the key delineation: Mary and her idle, rarified milieu at the top, with Crystal and her climbing coterie underneath, waiting for one of these rare birds to slip. An ad hoc network of manicurists and maids mete out well-received gossip (and plot points!) to our heroines, who tie themselves in knots trying to relay this juicy intel to the right parties at just the right time. Even poor, saintly Mary, the centre of this convoluted tale, discovers her husband's indiscretions while having her nails done in Jungle Red. When his infidelity is exposed, her trip to Reno becomes a foregone conclusion, but the journey to America's divorce capital is a bumpy one.

Cukor does some of his finest work as the rooster in this maniacal henhouse, bringing cinematic flourish to the oestrogen-soaked source material. With his signature gift for cultivating rhythmic delivery – seen later in *The Philadelphia Story* and *Adam's Rib* – and a flair for the extravagant (a Technicolor fashion show set piece midway through is particularly memorable), Cukor cultivates natural and nuanced performances from his cast of sirens; star Shearer, villainess Crawford, and a Greek chorus of gal pals that include Rosalind Russell, Joan Fontaine and Paulette Goddard. Directing ensemble scenes with upwards of half a dozen divas is no easy feat – leave it to Cukor to corral this kind of star power into a two hour-plus film that never takes a break to powder its nose. **CAROLINE GOLUM**



Shirkers

Directed by

SANDI TAN

Starring

SANDI TAN

JASMINE NG

SOPHIA SIDDIQUE HARVEY

Released

AUGUST

3

ANTICIPATION.

A debut feature about a lost debut feature.

4

ENJOYMENT.

This personal odyssey is vibrant, funny, strange and inspiring.

4

IN RETROSPECT.

A joyfully idiosyncratic memoir of a joyfully idiosyncratic-looking film and its maker.

From Jodorowsky's *Dune* to a film about Tim Burton's cancelled *Superman*, documentaries about movies that never got made have proved a popular prospect over recent years. Sandi Tan's energetic *Shirkers*, ostensibly an entry in this subgenre, differs for a few reasons. Firstly, it's made by the director of the original film it concerns, which shares the same name. Secondly, it's about an independent production the world never got to see, rather than a Hollywood property. Finally, and most crucially, the original *Shirkers* was actually completed. The reason it was never released is because one strange individual involved in the production stole all of the film's materials after the 1992 shoot had wrapped.

The thief was Georges Cardona, an American citizen teaching film in Singapore, who had developed a close bond with Tan and friends Jasmine Ng and Sophia Siddique Harvey, who all worked on *Shirkers*, which Tan directed and starred in at just 16 years of age. For two decades, the trio had no closure on why Cardona did what he did or where he went, until the man's ex-wife contacted Tan and returned the preserved 70 reels of film, though without the sound recordings. As Tan seeks out people abroad who knew Cardona, she discovers this isn't the only artistic endeavour he sabotaged.

Shirkers the documentary is assembled from various media, including the previously lost footage, animation, clips from other movies, interviews with former crew and the odd home movie. The result is a mystery film filtered through the aesthetic of a scrapbook or zine, appropriate to the punk spirit of

teenage Tan and Ng's own zine, 'The Exploding Cat'.

Given the contribution the original film should have made to Singapore's independent film movement, it feels trite to compare the look of the *Shirkers* footage with American productions that emerged since its early '90s shoot. Tan openly brings up such comparisons herself, describing how *Shirkers*, as this spiritual force, sent her distress signals during the years where she'd wanted to forget the whole thing and make peace with a chunk of her life being lost forever – she specifically cites feeling pangs upon seeing both Wes Anderson's *Rushmore* and Terry Zwigoff's *Ghost World*.

Links to other films also come through both details of the documentary's mystery element and its juxtapositions between footage of both *Shirkers* and other films. Among Cardona's various eccentricities were his saying that he inspired James Spader's character in *sex, lies, and videotape*. Elsewhere, Tan demonstrates that one of the man's key suggestions for *Shirkers* in terms of shot composition turned out to be a direct echo of a scene in *Paris, Texas*, which Tan only discovered upon seeing Wim Wenders' film years later.

Although revelations are unearthed, Tan's digging doesn't necessarily lead to any catharsis where everything is tied up neatly. It does prove therapeutic, though, and very entertaining and moving as a portrait of the effect of – to twist a turn of phrase for a different connotation – an artist literally being separated from their art. With this new *Shirkers*, now her feature debut, she's rebirthed her baby into something rather different.

JOSH SLATER-WILLIAMS



The Singapore filmmaker reflects on the legacy of her 'lost' 1992 film, *Shirkers*.

What does it mean to pour all of yourself into something, only to lose it? Detective doc *Shirkers* examines the mysterious legacy of Sandi Tan's missing film of the same name. Having unearthed the original footage more than 25 years later, she has shaped a story from the remnants, repairing the rupture and reuniting the participants.

LWLies: Near the start of *Shirkers*, quoting your 18-year-old self, you say: 'I had the idea that freedom is found by building worlds inside your head.' Do you still believe this?

Tan: I really believe it. To make this film, I had to recreate what it was like to be this crazy 18 year old where your head is spinning with ideas all the time, ideas that you can't begin to fulfil or understand. I had to dive into my archive and re-read a lot of letters I had written to my friends. I wrote three letters a day. Back then, before email, before LiveJournal and blogging, you had to write letters in order to remember things. Recreating that frame of mind, and remembering what it was like to feel free. I took that along with me when I was making this film. My starting point was not so much narrative as

emotional truth and intensity. I knew I would find the story once I could remember what it felt like to be that person and to have that film stolen from you. To begin that emotional journey, I had to return to that place again. Years go by and you bury that part of you. When you live in a place where filmmaking seems like a fantasy – because no one was making films at that point in Singapore – everything seems impossible, and therefore anything is possible.

What does it feel like to lose something like that? When I lost [*Shirkers*], it was like rendering myself mute. It was something I couldn't prove had ever happened, and I felt it was partly my fault. I had nowhere to go; it was extremely lonesome for many years. It was like living with a secret. I've followed the #MeToo movement over the past year, reading people's accounts about what happened to them, and this seemed similar to that. It is just in a different way that my friends and I had our possibilities ripped away from us. We had no way of talking about it, and no one would believe us or care. Our friendships broke up over this, but also we shared this secret, unspoken bond over this thing that had happened. Finding [the footage] again felt like vindication. Everything was as I remembered it, and I was not crazy. Making this film was my way of making it up to my friends, bringing everyone back together again. It gave me a sense of agency. I could now control the narrative of my life again rather than have it hijacked away from me like it had been.

What are your thoughts on the relationship between film and memory? When you went

back to examine the footage, how much did you remember, and how much seemed new?

I actually remembered almost all of it, I think – though that might be a trick. Sometimes it is bad to take photographs of things, as then you remember the photograph but not the actual memory. I was obsessed by the idea of memory back then. I used to think that. It's better to just press click on an empty camera, because then you remember the moment but don't have any record to rely on. We live among meaningless electronic shards, taking pictures all the time. What happens if you lose your drive, and it all vanishes into thin air? What will you be left with? Because of this, people don't really think about memory in an interesting way anymore. We document so much of our daily lives we forget to think in any detail, to analyse or mull over things in the way we used to.

It was really strange though. The thing I had forgotten was how crazy I was when I was a kid, how fired up I was about everything. Every letter I wrote had three movie ideas, three things I wanted to do. I was so intense. You forget the emotional memory more than the physical memory. When we try to remember ourselves, this is often neglected. Photos don't do enough, they show what you looked like on the outside but that is not who you were inside. I just want people like you to see [my documentary]. I want young people to get excited. Kids are coming up to me weeping after the screenings, wanting to get out there and make stuff. That's the greatest joy for me, to have all these people know that you can just do things and not be afraid 🌀



Yardie

Directed by
IDRIS ELBA

Starring
AML AMEEN
STEPHEN GRAHAM
FRASER JAMES

Released
24 AUGUST

4

ANTICIPATION.

A bouncy, well-soundtracked crime drama from Idris Elba.

3

ENJOYMENT.

A fresh look at an '80s immigrant community from Jamaica to London, but patchy and predictable.

3

IN RETROSPECT.

Enjoyable, but so deeply conventional that it feels a little played out.

“You either go with the righteous, or you go with the damned,” is one of the pearls of inscrutable wisdom in Idris Elba’s feisty directorial debut, *Yardie*. It’s evident what path the film’s central protagonist, Dennis (Aml Ameen), is liable to go on, and relatively few surprises are thrown up concerning the criminal underworld into which he is dragged. Elba’s film, a partial adaptation of Victor Headley’s cult 1992 novel, is an enjoyable, by-the-numbers crime drama, notable for its depiction of a portion of black British life too often unseen by cinema audiences. Its evocative soundtrack is also worth mentioning, as it features a wide variety of reggae deep cuts.

Yardie opens in West Kingston, Jamaica in 1973, offering a voiceover to map out the various gang rivalries in the city at that time. Elba presents us with an island nation both vibrant with natural beauty and fraught with terrible danger. Dennis, or ‘D’, is a young man raised against a backdrop of violence and is coached in criminality by a local kingpin known as King Fox (Sheldon Sheperd). But this was not always the case: as a young boy, he had been utterly in thrall to his charismatic older brother Jerry Dread, who was shot down in front of him while DJing at a party intended to bring together two rival Jamaican gangs.

A decade later, D finds himself dispatched to London with a large amount of cocaine to sell on behalf of his boss. There, he discovers the man who killed his brother, and he goes on a mad quest for vengeance. D is also reunited with his estranged wife Yvonne (Shantol Jackson) and young daughter.

His family have travelled to London without him in an attempt to make better lives for themselves, and as such D is not a totally welcome sight. He eventually courts the wrath of London boss Rico (Stephen Graham), much to the dismay of his family. A rogue’s gallery of supporting players are found a little wanting in the character stakes, with a coke-addled Graham grotesquely cribbing a Jamaican accent. His weak caricature is one of several uneven points in a story whose predictability is a problem, with a bog-standard revenge plot doing little to keep things gripping.

Nonetheless, one of *Yardie*’s strong points is that it never attempts to overreach. The film slots firmly within the parameters of the crime genre, and makes no effort to redeem or soften its central character. Even when D is placing others at risk, who become something like collateral damage in his quest for revenge, the film makes no attempt to shy away or pass comment on his misdeeds. Nor does it delve into the machismo and destructive pride that makes Dennis the locus of such violence. This is a vibrant period piece with an eye for the specificity of early ’80s London, with its bleak tower blocks, booming dance hall scenes, and flats with wall-to-wall yellow shag-rug. The Jamaican immigrant community are cloistered in their own neighbourhoods, and one of their alternative economies – the cocaine trade – also flourishes. *Yardie* does an excellent job at capturing this exhilarating and savage lifestyle, but often falls short when it’s doggedly cleaving to convention.

CHRISTINA NEWLAND



El mar la mar

Directed by
JOSHUA BONNETTA
JP SNIADOCKI
Released
3 AUGUST

3

ANTICIPATION.

A new JP Sniadecki ethnography doc is cause for excitement.

5

ENJOYMENT.

Explores the many frequencies of the desert to complicate America's immigration crisis.

5

IN RETROSPECT.

Monumentally important protest art.

Republican politicians and right wing pundits like to present American immigration reform as an issue of law and order, happily denying those people immediately affected by the most basic human decency. Example: the Trump administration's policy of separating immigrant children from their families with the aim of deterring future migrants from risking the same fate. The obvious evils of such governmental practices are not lost on directors Joshua Bonnetta and JP Sniadecki, the latter of whom has made multiple non-fiction films that grapple with the spatial intersection of politics and people. But their striking new ethnographic documentary, *El mar la mar*, counters the cruelties of conservative myth making in an altogether more viscerally stunning way.

Immersive cinematic techniques – including the relentless tweaking of image speed of sound – help turn the Sonoran Desert into a fragmented space of competing frequencies, faded relics and ghostly echoes. Their goal is to explore complicated connections between environment and memory that inherently contradict the typical rhetoric dominant in media coverage of America's southern border. The incredible opening tracking shot transforms a border fence into a pocket of ideological abstraction. Bonnetta and Sniadecki's approach comes full circle in the film's brief monochrome epilogue featuring a spoken passage from *Primero sueño* by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. The haunting words linger over pixelated vistas of desert lightning storms.

El mar la mar isn't always this stylistically experimental. Its lengthy middle section shifts

between grainy 16mm B-roll footage captured along barren stretches of Arizona and California, and first person testimonials from activists, locals and immigrants who have endured the long trek. Only voices are heard during these interviews, stripping the film of any one narrator. These unnamed subjects become psychological markers in a dense landscape study. And what living map of the desert wouldn't be complete without the elements of fire and wind? Fast burning flames whip up through a brush-laden ravine, while strong gusts easily push massive power lines from side to side. Long stretches of quiet help section off the film's eerie chapters. Here, *El mar la mar* leaves the viewer to their own thoughts, much in the way migrants might as they journey through "the terrifying silence" of the desert.

Some common themes emerge from the collision of language and landscape. Stories of survival, death and compassion create an emotional fabric that juxtaposes with the desert's unflinching intensity and penchant for erasure. Bonnetta and Sniadecki return time and again to the tattered artefacts left behind by migrants as a potent representation of this motif. These people may as well be America's disappeared, lost at sea in the desert.

Miraculously, *El mar la mar* remains urgently political by keeping empathy at its core. It strives to unearth what the desert so conveniently wipes away: untold stories of sacrifice and struggle that are neither easily recited statistics nor manipulative talking points. Will the American people ever care enough to listen? That might end up being the great moral question of our time. **GLENN HEATH JR**



Dogman

Directed by
MATTEO GARRONE
Starring
MARCELLO FONTE
EDOARDO PESCE
NUNZIA SCHIANO
Released
19 OCTOBER

4

ANTICIPATION.

Matteo Garrone returns to the crime-stained streets of southern Italy.

3

ENJOYMENT.

Cracking central performance aside, there's not a great deal to get excited about here.

2

IN RETROSPECT.

This social realist parable lacks bite.

Dogs of all shapes and sizes feature in Matteo Garrone's ninth feature, which sees the Italian filmmaker return to his social realist roots with a low-key crime drama that calls to mind his Cannes Grand Jury Prize-winner from 2008, *Gomorra*. Man's best friend is not the primary focus here though – as per the title, the film chronicles the life of a gentle dog groomer named Marcello (Marcello Fonte) who runs a small shop in a rough neighbourhood on the outskirts of Napoli.

Given the authentically gritty setting, where every man, woman and pup is seemingly on the take, it's unsurprising to learn that Marcello sells cocaine on the side to help pay for regular scuba diving trips with his young daughter, Sofia (Alida Baldari Calabria). Soon, however, Marcello's illicit dealings see him become mixed up with a hotheaded local brute named Simone (Edoardo Pesce) who's quick to take advantage of Marcello's passive nature and diminutive stature.

Marcello's unwavering kindness towards animals (in one scene he returns to the scene of a burglary to rescue a chihuahua, which one of the robbers has left to die in a freezer) makes him an instantly endearing figure, and although centring such a bleak story around a benign character could be viewed as a cheap, slightly cynical ploy from Garrone, the film benefits greatly from the lighter moments where Marcello is shown washing, walking and generally making a fuss over the various pooches in his care. Still, watching this big-hearted little man being constantly kicked around like a stray mutt makes for uncomfortable viewing.

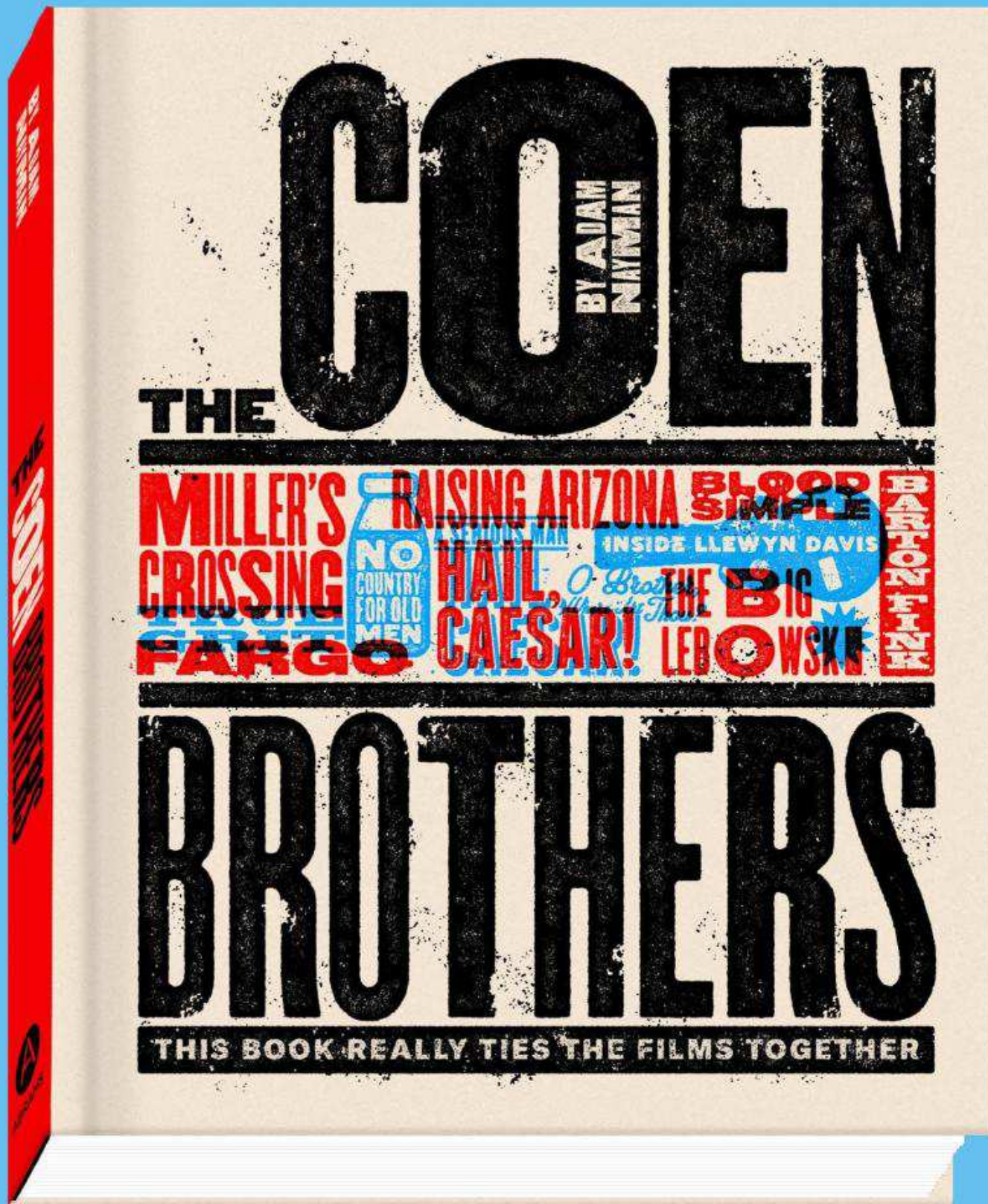
Dogman is pitched as an “urban western”, and Nicolai Brüel's dirt-smudged cinematography certainly adds a layer of grime and gloom to proceedings. Yet while the film is compelling enough as an unsentimental portrait of social decay in downtrodden southern Italy, it lacks the thematic muscularity and visceral jolt of Garrone's earlier work, in particular the explosive *Gomorra* and 2002's *The Embalmer*, about a middle-aged Neapolitan taxidermist.

In the neorealist tradition of Luchino Visconti, Roberto Rossellini and especially Vittorio De Sica, Garrone's protagonists tend to be ordinary people pitted against oppressive individuals, factions or larger systemic forces. Their daily struggles are typically depicted as being symptomatic of complex sociopolitical issues beyond their control. To that end, *Dogman* feels strangely unleashed from reality, the director displaying a basic unwillingness to develop both the central characters and narrative, instead driving home the tedious dog-eat-dog metaphor that forms the basis of this unrelentingly dour fable.

Garrone clearly knows how to construct taut allegorical thrillers on this scale, but following his ambitious, darkly comic previous features (*Reality* from 2012 and *Tale of Tales* from 2015) this feels like a comparatively minor work. Marcello's sympathetic putz schtick really does wear thin after a while (although Fonte works wonders with the material), and there's a sense of shrugging inevitability about the symbolic act of retribution that closes out the film. **ADAM WOODWARD**



Little White Lies presents



This Book Really Ties the Films Together

Out 11 September 2018



The Apparition

Directed by

XAVIER GIANOLLI

Starring

VINCENT LINDON

GALATÉA BELLUGI

PATRICK D'ASSUMÇÃO

Released

3 AUGUST

4

ANTICIPATION.

Always nice to be in the company of French powerhouse Vincent Lindon.

3

ENJOYMENT.

Come for Lindon, stay for young female newcomer, Galatée Bellugi.

3

IN RETROSPECT.

A laconic religious procedural that maybe has too many answers.

Procedural investigation movies tend to pose questions such as: who killed this guy, who stole the cash or where on earth is this missing woman? Xavier Gianolli's new film, *The Apparition*, lays down a conundrum to flummox even the most seasoned of gumshoe – does God actually exist? Vincent Lindon, a serious man for a serious role, plays Jacques Mayano, a surly photojournalist who has seen it all. In fact, he's been in close proximity to so much human suffering that, from a professional vantage, he's actually open to something a little different. And then, shut away in his house, blinds completely closed, he receives a call from... the Vatican? It turns out that a whey-faced, chronically bashful teenager named Anna (Galatée Bellugi) claims to have seen an apparition of the Virgin Mary in a field outside of a southern French village. A Roman cardinal earmarks Jacques as the perfect "sceptic" to enter the fray and discern whether she's inventing the whole thing. The affair is treated with an air of high seriousness, redolent of an actual criminal investigation, and Jacques is supplied with a full team of investigators – some believers, others not.

There's an interesting notion at the core of the film, which is the barely visible line that exists between respecting the beliefs of others, and intervening when it becomes clear that they're being duped by some nefarious force. The local church has corralled around Anna, whipping up her status as a religious celebrity. The congregation halls are now suddenly kitted out with lighting rigs and video monitors, and Anna is being pinballed between guest

spots on internet TV chat shows and photo shoots for craven merchandising opportunities. To an outsider, it may all appear a little cynical, especially as this new chosen one doesn't appear at all enamoured by the attention she's receiving. Yet she sees a kindred spirit in Jacques, who smells a rat from the off.

Gianolli's serious, slow-burn drama is at its best when keeping slithers of key information just out of sight, shifting away from the question of whether Anna is being coerced into lying and retaining questions of a more philosophical bent in its glassy sight-lines. The film is outspoken in its criticism of the Church and of parochial ignorance. Yet, as the plot develops, it does ask whether it's really such a bad thing that the lives of so many people have been enriched by a sense of false hope – the blind faith that there is some higher being looking out for them. And is that really such a bad thing? Is logic just a cruel mistress which is the first stop on the road to chronic depression?

At the point where matters are reaching critical mass, the film takes a bit of a wrong turn, opting to close things out on an unsightly full stop rather than an intriguing question mark. Visually the film contains a few nice moments, especially scenes of nuns filling duvet cases with feathers. Gianolli at the very least has an eye for framing and composition, even when he leans a little too heavily on shots of Jacques clutching his brow with a handily placed crucifix within the frame. Lindon is, as usual, good value, and treats the material with the utmost gravity, while Bellugi does well to sustain the mystery for as long as she does. **DAVID JENKINS**



Xavier Giannoli

The French director recounts falling in love with the lilting strains of Lithuanian composer, Arvo Pärt.

In a career which spans back to the early '90s, French stalwart director Xavier Giannoli has been punching out classy, crowd-pleasing features which have travelled the seven seas. His breakthrough came in 2006 with *The Singer*, a comedy-drama in which Gérard Depardieu is perfectly cast as a washed-up club singer.

His latest film, *The Apparition*, is a faith-themed detective saga starring one of cinema's most rugged leads, Vincent Lindon. The film's sombre, anguished tone is captured through its use of music, most notably 'Fratres' by the contemporary Lithuanian composer Arvo Pärt. Here, Giannoli tells the story of how he discovered the work of this neoclassical great, and how it brought him into close (albeit brief) contact with one of the giants of European arthouse cinema.

"I was an assistant runner on films many years ago. During that time I met a sound engineer named François Musy, and he was very generous to me. I was working on my first short film and I asked him if he could

help me because I needed a sound engineer. Musy had done 24 films with Jean-Luc Godard, and he actually lived near Godard in Switzerland. So, for my very first film, when I was 21 years old, this very generous guy came to the set and made sounds for me. Then he proposed that I go with him to Switzerland, where he has a mixing studio. And this studio connects directly to an auditorium used by Godard. I remember that moment distinctly. I arrived and Godard was sat there smoking a cigar.

"He is not known to be very generous with young people, but he was there. He was making his big video collage work, *Histoire(s) du Cinéma*, and every day I could hear him working. Sometimes he just came to see François and ask for a cable for his machine. Just imagine, you are 21 years old, you are here, and suddenly you have the god of cinema arriving and saying, 'Sorry to disturb, I just need a cable'. And I swear to god it's true. So, it was impossible for me to focus on my work because I was so afraid that he would see my stupid film.

"He was listening to music all the time, and that was the first time I heard Arvo Pärt. I asked François, 'What is this music?' and he told me it's from Manfred Eicher [the founder of ECM Records]. When Godard is editing a film they give him boxes with tons of CDs and he watches the images and just tries different music each time. So I heard a CD and François gave it to me and I remember listening on my stereo. I think I had maybe six words with Godard himself: hello, goodbye, thank you.

"That was the idea with Arvo Pärt, that was the first time I ever heard him. After that I recognised him in many films like Paul Thomas Anderson's *There Will Be Blood* or in Bennett Miller's *Foxcatcher*. It's very symphonic music, something very deep and very simple. There is something very spiritual that can lend a film a sense of gravity, but there is also something very modest too. At the end of the film, that is not the music of *Contempt (Le Mépris)*.

"At the end of the film I use some different music by Georges Delerue. It's very strange music which he made for a documentary about astrophysics. I heard it and, for me, it's just beautiful. It's important because it's Georges Delerue and it connects all the big directors together. Of course, Godard, and in Scorsese's *Casino*, you have the music of *Contempt*. It's kind of a tribute to cinema, and a tribute to something else. In coming from a documentary about astrophysics, you can see scientists, sceptics, and in the end, they ask the question of God. They spend their life watching the universe and in the end they have to ask the question because all of it is too much to be a simple coincidence, and you can feel that in this music, that there is something spiritual.

"A funny story. You will like it. One time my wife asks me what the place looks like, so I go to show her on Google Earth. You know Google Earth is cars with cameras? And Godard is there on the street. Isn't it beautiful? This street is 20 metres away from the place I was talking about, but isn't it poetic that a Google car passing by captures Godard?"



Skate Kitchen

Directed by **CRYSTAL MOSELLE**
Starring **KABRINA ADAMS, JULES LORENZO,
RACHELLE VINBERG**
Released **28 SEPTEMBER**

Support, power and the natural turbulence of sisterhood shine through in Crystal Moselle's *Skate Kitchen*, a film about female friendship which rejects the sideshow baggage of toxicity and hatred. This sun-warmed coming-of-age introduces Rachelle Vinberg as Camille, a lonely teen who just wants to skate. She struggles to forge a connection with her peers in the Long Island suburb she calls home, and so escapes to New York City to find an Instagram-famous female skate collective: The Skate Kitchen. The film is based on Moselle's 2016 short *That One Day*, which features much of the same cast. Real members of The Skate Kitchen play thinly disguised versions of themselves: they wear their own clothes (bejewelled with unique New York style); they skate on their home turf; and much of the film recreates their lived experience. The years of chemistry between the crew and their familiarity with skater slang adds authenticity to the film's dialogue, coming to them as naturally as an ollie.

This relatability also extends to the simple plot, which is told in drags during afternoons at the skatepark and subway rides spent damning the patriarchy. Its measured pace feels true to life; Camille's relationship with her protective mother ebbs and flows, and romances aren't always what they seem. Friendship fallouts are revelatory life events for Camille to whom these girls become family. At points this lack of drama makes investment in the characters a little tough, in spite of their individual vibrancy. Regardless, the plot plays second fiddle to an atmosphere of nostalgia. So essential to skating is the feeling, the freedom, the flying – all shared with your tube-socked, tie-dyed posse. Moselle reproduces this with mellow tones and ambient sounds. The slow motion shots of hedonistic parties and mesmerising skate sequences capture the idea that skating is a lifestyle for these characters – it doesn't end when they step off a board. **EVE JONES**

ANTICIPATION. *Skating in the kitchen? Cooking in the skatepark?*

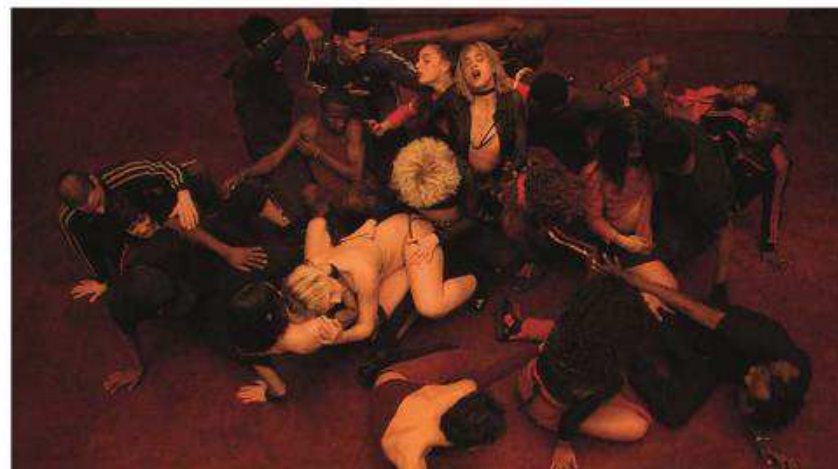
4

ENJOYMENT. *Pot, periods and kickflips brought to life with a dreamy aesthetic.*

4

IN RETROSPECT. *A mobilising portrait of sisterhood and skate culture.*

4



Climax

Directed by **GASPAR NOÉ**
Starring **SOFIA BOUTELLA, ROMAIN GUILLERMIC,
SOUHEILA YACOB**
Released **21 SEPTEMBER**

A glittering *Tricolore* hangs on the back wall of a grungy community hall where a professional dance ensemble are gathered for what is to be their final rehearsal. As a thumping house track blares out from a PA system, the dancers launch into an exhilarating five-minute routine, the camera capturing their every bump, grind and twist in a single, swirling take. They break only for the party atmosphere to immediately be cranked up several notches. The camera keeps rolling, roving freely around the open-plan space to capture snippets of conversation by turns idle and intimate. The dancers laugh and chat and drink and dance some more. Then someone spikes the punch and the celebratory setting is suddenly transformed into a hedonistic hellscape.

Welcome to the latest Very Bad Trip from lovable rogue Gaspar Noé, director of such eye-watering works as *Irréversible*, *Enter the Void* and *Love*. Depicting humanity's worst excesses is Noé's forte, of course, and the controversy-courting Argentine clearly relishes putting his cast of twerking twentysomethings through the wringer. Among the performers in this Dantean disco are a bickering lesbian couple, a single mother and her young son, an overprotective brother with incestuous inclinations and a pair of adidas-clad bros who casually brag about having "dry" anal sex with the women in their company. And then there's star-on-the-rise Sofia Boutella, who gives a performance that can only be described as fully committed. It's a pity Noé spends so much time choreographing the immersive long takes which make up the mercifully lean runtime (when the cuts aren't neatly concealed they're marked by frame-filling, pseudo-philosophical title cards such as "Birth is a unique opportunity") instead of fleshing out his characters. Watching the cast go completely nuts is a lot of fun, but ultimately it's hard to actually care about the grisly fate that befalls them. **ADAM WOODWARD**

ANTICIPATION. *Gaspar Noé is back with, predictably enough, a bang.*

4

ENJOYMENT. *Sort of like Fame, if the entire cast were high on LSD.*

3

IN RETROSPECT. *Like going to nightclub sober when everyone inside is already fucked.*

3



MATANGI/MAYA/M.I.A.

Directed by **STEVE LOVERIDGE**

Starring **M.I.A.**

Released **21 SEPTEMBER**

The story goes that in 2011 Sri Lankan hip hop agitator M.I.A. handed over many hundreds of hours of personal footage to her old art school pal Steve Loveridge in order that he might shape it into a movie. Flash forward to 2018 and the product of seven years in the edit suite is *MATANGI/MAYA/M.I.A.*, a spiky if highly conventional profile piece that is in no way reflective of its conspicuously weird title treatment. Per a film festival press conference, the militantly plainspoken M.I.A. (real name Maya Arulpragasam) is apparently not at all that thrilled with the result, though it's a little difficult to understand from where her ire stems.

Her meteoric rise to fame is laced with controversy, and the film appears as an attempt to balance the scales. For instance, when she voices her anger at the oppression of Sri Lankan Tamils during a publicity blitz ahead of the 2008 Grammys, she's mocked for politicising her status as a light entertainer. Having already seen moving amateur footage from her twenties when she decided to return to her birthplace to acquire first-hand knowledge of the situation there, the tables turn and the film is more about how she was often the butt of institutionalised racism. As a whistle-stop tour of her life so far, it works fairly well, primarily because there's a surfeit of vivid material to complement the various episodes.

An hour into the film, Loveridge seems to be on a mission to absolve his erstwhile cohort of all her apparent sins, framing her critics as a bigots and guttersnipes while always giving M.I.A. the last word. Her long and vocal association with WikiLeaks is notable by its absence, lending the film the feel of lively propaganda rather than an honest reflection of life as a nonconformist in the limelight.

DAVID JENKINS

ANTICIPATION. *A documentary profile that has been coolly recieved by its subject must be good.*

4

ENJOYMENT. *Well put together and packed with lots of revealing behind-the-scenes footage.*

3

IN RETROSPECT. *Hard to know the nature of M.I.A.'s beef – unless she wanted it to be more objectively critical.*

3



The Man from Mo'Wax

Directed by **MATTHEW JONES**

Starring **JAMES LAVELLE, DJ SHADOW, JOSH HOMME**

Released **31 AUGUST**

Founded by James Lavelle, Mo'Wax Records was a pioneer of the UK's trip hop scene in the early 1990s, signing ground-breaking underground artists such as DJ Shadow, Dr Octagon and Blackalicious. The once independent label eventually became affiliated with the majors, and *The Man From Mo'Wax* focuses on how its founder shifted from having the world at his feet to complete isolation. The documentary works best when it depicts the troubled bromance between Lavelle and Joshua 'DJ Shadow' Davis, who created electronic group UNKLE's debut album, 'Psyence Fiction'. Although Davis played the music, Lavelle took equal credit, with the former complaining: "Most A&R men don't get a writer's credit!"

This should have been the heart of this documentary, with director Matthew Jones focusing on whether Lavelle's skill laid in bringing people together or leeching off their talents. Unfortunately, Jones spends too long exploring UNKLE's ill-conceived later albums (without Davis), which is occasionally exhausting. Lavelle is a magnetic character, but beyond usual rockstar clichés, we don't get a three-dimensional portrait for viewers to empathise with. If only Jones explained who he was outside the studio more, and the impact of missing a childhood (Lavelle started Mo'Wax when he was 18).

Earlier this year, Swedish DJ Avicii committed suicide, with the hedonistic pressures of touring said to have played a major role. Throughout this documentary, Lavelle admits to living a similarly "nocturnal lifestyle" as a DJ and having had to "take drugs to stay awake". The inference is that this caused two divorces, depression and an inability to manage his finances. Again, Jones doesn't go far enough in exploring these excesses – a missed opportunity, especially given the current conversation around electronic music and its strain on the mental health of its artists. **THOMAS HOBBS**

ANTICIPATION. *Lavelle has lived an incredible life. His is a story that deserves to be told.*

4

ENJOYMENT. *An interesting cautionary tale about ambition, but tries to cram in too much.*

3

IN RETROSPECT. *One for the Mo'Wax purists. For the uninitiated, this can be hard to sit through.*

2



The Other Side of Orson Welles

As the legendary filmmaker's 'lost' swansong nears completion, *LWLies* anticipates a masterpiece 42 years in the making.

In January 2018, a gaggle of Hollywood A-listers, including directors Quentin Tarantino, Alexander Payne and Rian Johnson, filed into a Santa Monica screening room to see a rough cut of a film which finished principal photography a mere 42 years earlier. Among them were one of its key cast members, 79-year-old Peter Bogdanovich, and actor Danny Huston, son of the film's leading man, John Huston, a formidable director in his own right. It was a momentous occasion, one that most film lovers thought they would never live to see: the completion of Orson Welles' last movie, *The Other Side of the Wind*.

It's hard to quantify the sheer mystique that Welles carries for many in the movie world, as tantalising and enigmatic as the Harry Lime character he so memorably embodied in *The Third Man*. Somehow larger than life, Welles stands as both emblematic celluloid maverick and long-suffering martyr for the seventh art. Aged 25, the young man who was New York theatre's reigning wunderkind was given fulsome resources and complete control by RKO to write, direct and star in 1941's *Citizen Kane*, a saga of entrepreneurial ambition, hubris and self-destruction which for years was routinely regarded as the greatest movie ever made. After his follow-up, the dynastic portrait *The Magnificent Ambersons*, was mangled by the studio while Welles was in Brazil at the behest of the US government, the ensuing decades proved a lengthy scramble to show that his creative fires remained undimmed, even as he was battling in reduced circumstances both in America and across Europe. That's why, for some, Welles remains the very acme of the visionary filmmaker pitting his wits against the money-men and the system who just don't understand true art. By the 1970s, outsiders would see the big man as an occasional bit-part actor, TV talk show stalwart and undignified advertising hawk for various brands of booze, but *The Other Side of the Wind* was conceived by Welles as a scathing retort to all the doubters who saw him as some sort of ongoing sad joke.

It didn't exactly happen that way, but even in 2018 the triumph and tragedy of Orson Welles remains so fascinating that it is no surprise so many of Hollywood's current great and good turned out for him. Rumour has it that they stayed so long discussing the film afterwards that the valet parking boys went home, leaving Tarantino to take a taxi. This isn't the only project Welles left unfinished at the time of his death in 1985, but it is likely to be the only one which will ever be completed. As such, there's a kind of aching irony that *The Other Side of the Wind*, a multi-faceted portrait with elements of autobiography, is actually about an exiled, once-lionised filmmaker returning to Hollywood to show his latest unfinished project, find the money to finish it and settle old scores.

In a textbook life-imitating-art scenario, Welles himself spent much of his later years begging hither and yon for the funding to complete it, but no one was willing to take a punt. Subsequent legal tangles over his estate and the ownership of the negative, held in a Paris vault, made progress even stickier, but a recent cash injection from Netflix made the problems disappear. The final assembly of the film, replete with an original score by Michel Legrand, will premiere this autumn in tandem with *They'll Love Me When I'm Dead*, an accompanying documentary by Morgan Neville named after Welles' catchphrase for when his schmoozing of potential financiers failed to attract fresh investment.

For dedicated cinephiles, the release of *The Other Side of the Wind* is an event akin to finding an unexplored chamber in the Great Pyramid, or discovering that Leonardo da Vinci also painted the Mona Lisa's twin sister. By the same token, there will be a whole new generation who have maybe only seen clips of *Citizen Kane*, perhaps only recognise the hall of mirrors shoot-out from *The Lady from Shanghai*, or possibly the bravura Mexican border time-bomb tracking shot which opens *Touch of Evil*. They'll know Welles is supposed to be a 'Big Deal', but aren't totally familiar with his work. And it's precisely those viewers Welles wanted to reach when he set out in early 1970 on what would become the labyrinthine journey to filming *The Other Side of the Wind*. His avowed intention was to create a film that would bookend a career which began in a blaze of glory with *Citizen Kane*, but which was in no way a rehash of past accomplishments. This was to be a film to look forward, create a daring new cinematic form, and to show everyone that Orson was still hipper than any of the bright young things shaking the traditional film industry at its foundations as the '60s crashed into the '70s.

"On a style level, it's cut in a way that feels slightly beyond where we are now," *The Last Jedi* director Rian Johnson has commented, as yet the only filmmaker to publicly give an opinion on the reconstructed *The Other Side of the Wind*. "It's got a very fast collage-like feel. The movie keys directly into what's grand and tragic about Welles' later years... we were all gobsmacked." At the time of writing, the film remains under wraps prior to launch, but with Josh Karp's 2015 book-length study 'Orson Welles' Last Movie' as an entertaining reference point, and having seen an almost complete cut of Morgan Neville's assiduous, downright nifty accompanying feature documentary, we certainly know enough to add further fuel to already leaping levels of anticipation. If you're expecting something in the exquisitely composed style of *Citizen Kane*, well, forget it. The film has two different modes, and neither of them are Welles' typically elaborate yet controlled manner.

“If the result marks a stylistic departure for Welles, it’s also thematically consistent with his best work.”

The story unfolds over a single day as John Huston’s beleaguered protagonist, grandstanding in the face of his impending career doom, screens his latest work-in-progress to guests at his Hollywood home, encouraging them to document the event. It plays out as a mock-doc *vérité* mosaic supposedly pieced together from whatever his various industry colleagues shot on the day. The footage we’ve seen is quicksilver stuff, but somehow intimate at the same time, zeroing in on the most illuminating moments of Huston’s apparent unravelling, while Bogdanovich plays a bankable young director scorned by his former mentor. It’s far removed from Welles’ previous output, as is the film-within-a-film, which could be read as Huston’s ill-judged attempt to appear cinematically down-with-the-kids – the dialogue-free result coming across like bad Antonioni pushed to the point of self-parody. There are lonely figures set against glass-and-steel modern architecture, meaningful looks towards the camera, and Welles’ winnowy muse and partner, the Croatian artist Oja Kodar, in various states of undress – including an eye-popping sex scene in a rainswept car, cut together to the rhythms of the thrusting bodies. Some of this you could imagine passing off as a modern-day perfume ad, but it is certainly a conversation-starter to see Welles putting so much effort into showing that he could make a naff European art movie if he really, really wanted to.

Quite how those two elements work together as a sustained narrative we’ll only know when the completed film eventually hits our screens, though it has to be noted that what we’ll see has had to be put together by other hands. Welles managed to cut together around 40 minutes to his own exacting standards, and the remainder of what’s expected to run close to two hours has been assembled by *The Hurt Locker* editor Bob Murawski according to Welles’ notes and the input of those who were there during the six-year shoot – namely the production manager (then later regular Steven Spielberg producer) Frank Marshall and the aforementioned *The Last Picture Show* auteur Bogdanovich, whom Welles had personally asked to take care of the project should he not live to complete it. So, it’s not a director’s cut per se, but the fact we’re getting *The Other Side of the Wind* at all is remarkable given the chaotic state of its production and the near-surreal levels of legal machinations which kept the negative locked away.

If the result marks a stylistic departure for Welles, it’s also thematically consistent with his best work. Just as *Citizen Kane* shows the psychological ferment within a great public figure, so *The Other Side of the Wind* is an unpeeling of its central old-school director, played by Huston Sr in Hemingway-ish mode, determined to show the vulnerability behind the machismo – an approach which involved keeping Huston mildly sozzled throughout, so they’d get emotionally revealing takes before he keeled over. The unfolding friction between the Huston and Bogdanovich characters also cleaves to the proximity of loyalty and betrayal, which features strongly in Welles’ filmography, such as *Touch of Evil* where Welles’ hulking corrupt

local cop falls foul of one of his stalwart underlings, and most movingly in *Chimes at Midnight*, the brilliant 1966 reshaping of Shakespeare where Welles’ portly gentleman Falstaff is ultimately discarded by the young Prince Hal to whom he’s virtually been a father. Could all this be a pointer to some festering hurt from Welles’ own formative years?

One terrific sequence in Neville’s documentary illustrates Welles the performer’s penchant for fake noses, wigs and make-up, suggesting that with Welles everything on-screen is essentially a mask he hides behind. Maybe so, yet in practical terms the sheer turmoil of making *The Other Side of the Wind* does rather illuminate some of the vicissitudes of this contrary, grandiose character. The raggle-taggle crew who worked endless hours to facilitate his improvisatory genius also saw the tantrum-throwing, spontaneously childish side of their hero. Day after day, Welles kept shooting, keeping to himself a door-stopper script which he continually tapped away at but never gave to the actors, who often worked to the director’s vague instructions. Was it the behaviour of a control freak, or did he never really have a complete grasp on what he wanted to do with the material?

His messy finances also proved a problem, since he used his own money to get the project underway but didn’t have a bank account that his subsequent French-Iranian backers could transfer into. So you had a cash flow where state aid from Iran was being funnelled through a Paris-based film company run by the Shah’s brother-in-law, then wired to Welles’ cameraman, who cashed it and filled the drawers in Welles’ office. To make matters even crazier, when the Iranian money dried up (thanks to the country’s Islamic revolution) Welles blamed his co-producers for not bankrolling the edit, while they in turn claimed his refusal to set down a delivery date for the film was the real reason it dragged on for so long. Was Welles’ apparent perfectionist tinkering just a cover for the nagging fear that the film wasn’t going to be the magnum opus he wanted and needed it to be? Only time will tell.

That time is almost upon us, thanks to Marshall and fellow producer Filip Jan Rymzsa, whose diplomatic skills in settling matters with the Iranians, plus rival heirs in Welles’ former muse Kodar and daughter Beatrice Welles from his third marriage, has finally brought *The Other Side of the Wind* out of the vault and into the light. One can’t imagine that the big man himself would even have conceived of the technological revolution that has given an internet streaming platform the wherewithal and the will to facilitate a release which has taken the best part of a lifetime to realise. Still, that bellowing rueful laughter you can hear from the heavens might just be Welles himself, chomping on a massive cigar and enjoying his favourite tipple. They’ll love me when I’m dead indeed 🍷

The complete version of Orson Welles’ The Other Side of the Wind and the documentary They’ll Love Me When I’m Dead launch on Netflix 2 November.

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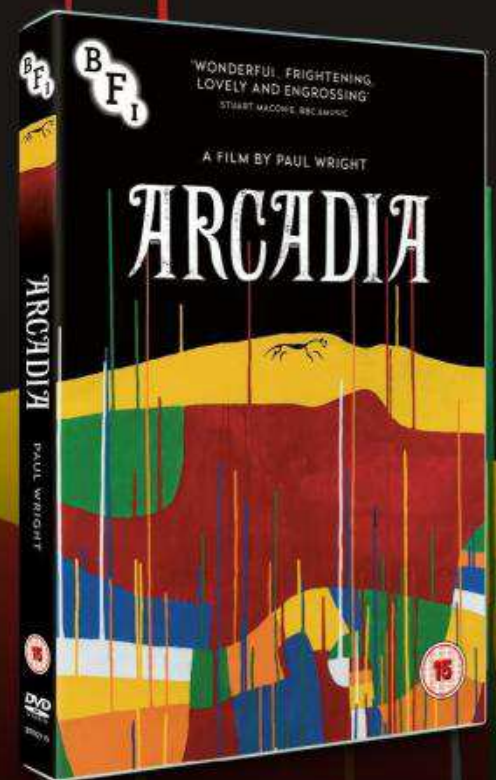
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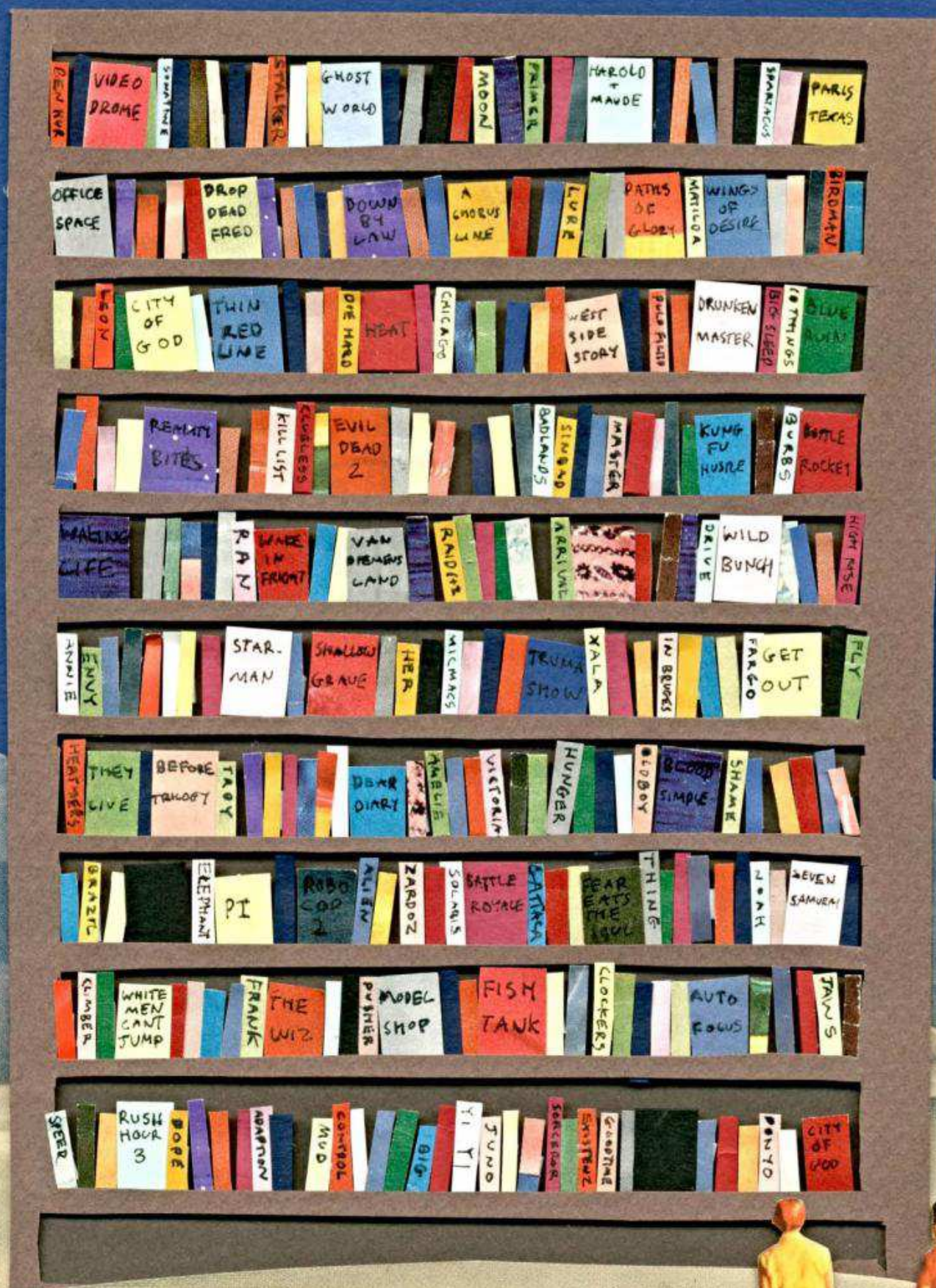
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The Resurrection of the Video Store

Could Baltimore's crowdfunded Beyond Video be the start of a major comeback for a bygone neighbourhood staple?

In the process of relentless domestic decluttering, those bulky VHS players we used to have propping up our tube televisions have, for many, met their maker. Anyone training the crosshairs at the DVD or Blu-ray machine, believing that streaming services are the sole solution to all film watching needs, may want to hang tight. Eric Hatch is part of a collective based in Baltimore who have secured \$32,500 through a crowdfunding campaign and are now set to resurrect the time-honoured tradition of the video rental store.


Beyond Video is not going to be a replica of the type of commercial chains which pebble-dashed their walls with hundreds of copies of the latest Hollywood product and with little concession to the classics of cinema. It's going to be more in line with the current vogue for records shops – run by staff who know their subject, and offering a broad range of movies from across the globe and which celebrates rather than shuns those little known, little seen historical greats. “Video stores are super important to me,” says Hatch who grew up in the Baltimore suburb of Columbia and received his cultural education through book, record and video stores. “There is nostalgia embedded in the project,” he admits. “I think we are recreating, to a certain extent, something we love and we miss. Also, it's something that an entire generation missed out on, the younger hip people who never got the bug for streaming services.”

Part of this mission is actually in homage to a fallen mainstay of the Baltimore movie scene: an independent mini-chain called Video Americain whose last store shuttered in 2014. “If you watch the John Waters film *Serial Mom*, that's the store you see there. I worked as manager at that shop for about six years. My career subsequent to that has been as a programmer for film festivals and as a film critic. I owe everything to video stores like Video Americain. In 1998, the owner of Video Americain, as a bonus, sent me and a co-worker to the Toronto International Film Festival, and it really changed my life. I became the programmer for the Maryland Film Festival, and my co-worker, Sean Price Williams, is now a noted cinematographer. Initially, we were all former Video Americain employees and we didn't want to see it go away. Our goal was to create a comparable space with a business model that would work in today's reality.”

The store itself is being made possible by a friendly landlord who believes in the project and it will inhabit a building which used to be a slightly Satantic punk record store called Reptilian Records.

The driving force behind the project is the sincere belief that cinephiles want the chance to choose movies for themselves, and they want to take their damn time about it. “Browsing for something to watch online feels terrible,” says Hatch. “It feels like wasted time. Whereas browsing in a video store, if it's a good one, feels edifying and fulfilling. It speaks to the way a video store can have a more comprehensive collection, how it can be organised in a more appealing way. Just the fact that there's a human being to talk to. Video stores are important community spaces. Algorithms can yield some really interesting results, but human conversation still has them beat.”

Despite a healthy scepticism towards the world of digital streaming, Beyond Video doesn't seem like a violent reaction to giants like Netflix and Amazon Prime. Yet Hatch believes that, in the realm of film, there isn't any online catalogue that comes close to being referred to as comprehensive. “There are algorithms for determining what you like are probably better than what they have been. Unlike with music, where there are some very comprehensive sources that have almost everything that you would want to hear, there is no comparable source for film.” Often it's not just a case of cultivating personal tastes, but diverting attentions towards what the service wants you to see. “The way I look at it, Netflix destroyed video stores with this promise of universal availability. Then like a big box store, it waded in and shut down all the mom and pop stores, and then changed its business model. The promise that film history is available to you at your fingertips is false.”

Hatch and his gang haven't just been crowdfunding for cash, but for stock too: “We've been receiving collections and any rogue film that people just want to get rid of, primarily DVDs. We've been doing a lot of work trying to build a comprehensive collection and identify the titles that we don't have. I created a Google doc with a wish list. People from all over the continent have sent us one title, 10 titles, 100 titles that we need.” Were pornographic titles considered? “Some think we should. We kept it off our original crowdsourcing list as we didn't want to handle used porn coming in the mail. We think it's probably worthwhile to offer some of the historically significant adult films from the '70s as they really are part of the wider story of cinema. But there won't be a special room you go into with a curtain or anything like that” 

Keep up with Beyond Video's progress at beyondvideo.org



Death Line

<i>Directed by</i> GARY SHERMAN	1972
<i>Starring</i> DAVID LADD SHARON GURNEY DONALD PLEASANCE	<i>Released</i> 27 AUGUST
	<i>Blu-ray</i>

Long before it served as a set piece in John Landis' *An American Werewolf in London*, or the home of a hellish monster in Christopher Smith's *Creep*, the London Underground was home to a tribe of cannibals in Gary Sherman's *Death Line*. Released in 1972 and set largely on the Piccadilly Line, it sees American student Alex (David Ladd) and his girlfriend Patricia (Sharon Gurney) caught up in a police investigation after they stop to help an unconscious man – James Manfred, OBE – on the Russell Square platform. Something sinister lurks within the tunnels, and it's snatching unsuspecting passengers. Inspector Calhoun (Donald Pleasance) is convinced that Alex and Patricia are to blame. When Manfreds disappears, Christopher Lee's snooty MI5 officer Stratton-Villiers is called in and seems suspiciously keen to close the case.

With a supposed 49 abandoned tube stations dotted across the capital, it's not unthinkable that some spooky things are going on deep beneath pavement level, and *Death Line* does suffer slightly from having a better premise than execution, but it deserves full credit for portraying a horrifically deformed monster with a surprising amount of sympathy. The creature is only capable of uttering "Mind the doors", but actor Hugh Armstrong manages to add a surprising amount of emotion to his delivery – even Patricia begs her boyfriend not to hurt him, in contrast to the usual kill-it-with-fire approach to movie monsters. There's also some interesting social commentary which derides the upper echelons of London society for shrewdly attempting to cover up the accident from which the tube's cannibal inhabitants arose. The special effects might look tame by today's gorific standards but it's essential viewing for any genre die-hard, or indeed complacent commuter. **HANNAH WOODHEAD**



Invention for Destruction

<i>Directed by</i> KAREL ZEMAN	1958
<i>Starring</i> LUBOR TOKOŠ ARNOŠT NAVRÁTIL MIROSLAV HOLUB	<i>Released</i> 24 SEPT
	<i>Blu-ray</i>

In Hollywood, there is a futile race to see who can fool the eye more convincingly among the big studios. Vast resources are being diverted to projects which fuse finely rendered digital animation to live action 'assets', the goal being an illusion of realism. Yet when trying too hard to hide the form and tuck away the frayed seams of the filmmaking process, you lose that humane aspect – of film as an artisan craft. The master Czech animator Karel Zeman devised a way to showcase his own creative flights of fancy by making the fantasy elements of his whimsical hybrid adventures as artificial as possible. In 1958's dazzling homage to Jules Verne, *Invention for Destruction*, he tells the story of a scientist kidnapped by pirates, spirited away to a dormant volcano and put to work on a strange weapon.

The backdrops take the form of vintage lithographs, or the illustrated monochrome etchings you might see in old newspapers. He cleverly edits between graphic depictions of characters and actors who move against magnificent pictorial landscapes. In one corner of the frame there will be some exotic fish animated in stop motion, then some undersea nature footage, and later some puppet work or cut-outs gliding across the middle-distance. It's actually very difficult to describe Zeman's visual modus operandi as there are so many moving parts, but the thrill comes from the palpable ingenuity and the director's promise to always show his working. Yet his almanac of tricks and deceptions is always put to the service of drama and atmosphere. There is not a single frame which feels like a monument to the director's visual mastery. This is Second Run DVD's third Zeman release, following 1962's *The Fabulous Baron Munchausen* and 1964's *A Jester's Tale*. All three are absolutely wonderful and you must buy them now. **DAVID JENKINS**



It Happened Here

<i>Directed by</i> KEVIN BROWNLOW ANDREW MOLLO <i>Starring</i> PAULINE MURRAY, SEBASTIAN SHAW, BART ALLISON	1965
	OUT NOW
	<i>Blu-ray</i>

During World War Two, numerous films were produced and released in the UK which warned the populace of the approaching Nazi scourge. They prompted us to do everything in our power to ward off totalitarianism and the imperialist aspirations of Adolf Hitler. Twenty years after the conflict, noted film historian Kevin Brownlow teamed up with military expert Andrew Mollo to produce a film which offered an alternative postwar timeline, one in which the Nazis had triumphed at Dunkirk and made swift incursions into the UK mainland. Filmed as a brittle docu-fiction that lightly mimics rough-hewn newsreel footage, *It Happened Here* is a story about the banality of evil and the normalisation of hatred. It follows an ideologically bewildered nurse named Pauline (Pauline Murray) as she traipses through a country that's in a state of semi-ruin, wondering whether she should toe the party line in the name of personal survival, or question the brutal regime in the name of personal redemption.

It's a fascinating and singular film, and alongside the current surge of right-leaning populist thought, very apropos as well. Chilling sequences like the jackbooted menace marching on Whitehall offer a broad interpretation of what a Nazi occupation might look like. Yet the fact that Brownlow has a gang of street urchins mocking a platoon of goose-stepping soldiers offers a hint that we're not a nation to roll over and accept our political just desserts. It's a cliché to say that many of the arguments employed by the neophyte Nazis to justify the cause are rife within the modern news media, but also the film stresses the fact that simple, logical questioning often causes these bigoted beliefs to fall to pieces. **DAVID JENKINS**

Surf Nazis Must Die

<i>Directed by</i> PETER GEORGE <i>Starring</i> GAIL NEELY ROBERT HARDEN BARRY BRENNER	1987
	OUT NOW
	<i>Blu-ray</i>

Cast your mind back to classic surf movies like *Big Wednesday*, and ethereal images of glistening torsos being propelled by the giant, foaming breakers. They offer an harmonious merging of man and nature, a vision of gentle domination and daredevil conquest. Peter George's 1987 exploitation feature *Surf Nazis Must Die* transforms that idyllic dream into a moronic, cheese-induced nightmare, as gobby acolytes of Adolf Hitler attempt to forcibly annex the Southern California sands to make way for the coming gunboats and a national socialist takeover. This is a film from the infamous Troma stable, and it very much delivers on the in-joke obnoxiousness of its title. The Surf Nazis themselves are a gaggle of black-clad hoodlums who carp and squark about their new Reich and spend much of the film huddled around a campfire flashing around oversized hunting knives and screaming.

The story kicks into gear when we hear of their plans for domination, and their foolish decision to murder a young black man overseeing a lone oil derrick. Little do they realise, the man's mother is an avenging insaniac who breaks out of her nursing home and tools up for some home-fried retribution. It's filmmaking made by a group of friends who need something to fill up their weekends, and visual ingenuity is often replaced by the quickest, cheapest option. Yet, there's something retroactively charming about this garbled, dress-up opus in which rival gangs shadow box against the sunset and extended fight scenes are executed in what appear like improvised single takes. Yet there are a couple of beautiful shots of far-right soldiers riding the waves with swastika-emblazoned wetsuits which yield a certain grace and level of professionalism that's otherwise MIA. **DAVID JENKINS**



A Man Escaped

<i>Directed by</i> ROBERT BRESSON	1956
<i>Starring</i> FRANÇOIS LETERRIER CHARLES LE CLAINCHE MAURICE BEERBLOCK	<i>Released</i> 20 AUGUST
	<i>Blu-ray</i>

If the function of a horror movie is to strike fear into the heart of an unsuspecting viewer, then Robert Bresson's 1956 tightrope walk *A Man Escaped* most definitely fits into that category. There are no monsters, no jump scares, no puddles of blood or thunderous musical cues. It is instead the meticulously refined tale of a French resistance fighter named Fontaine (François Leterrier) who is jailed by Nazi occupying forces and who then plays a long, slow game in a bid for freedom. The sense of fear derives from the respect we develop for the ever-industrious Fontaine and knowing that – even though the title forewarns us of his eventual success – his life constantly hangs by a thread. We hear but seldom see the guards who stomp up and down the gangways, occasionally grabbing an inmate and sending them off for execution. It's the simple fear of the unknown, of the presence behind the walls and even the world beyond the prison.

As he develops an intricate scheme to chisel away a panel from his cell door and slip through a skylight during a shift change, his chances of survival dwindle. Yet while his escape may be a *fait accompli*, Bresson focuses the small processes which lead Fontaine to salvation. Where the director in his later films often employed his subjects – humans and animals – as the focal point for horrendous suffering, Fontaine is a more traditional hero who is rewarded for his compassion and diligence. Even if it seems like a fallacy to claim this as one of the director's greatest films (as it is somewhat atypical), the emotional heft generated from its ice-cold treatment is awe-inspiring to say the least. Even with hints at how things turn out, the big finale is still one of the great heart-in-mouth sequences to ever land itself on film. **DAVID JENKINS**



The Nun

<i>Directed by</i> JACQUES RIVETTE	1966
<i>Starring</i> ANNA KARINA LISELOTTE PULVER FRANCINE BERGÉ	<i>Released</i> 10 SEPT
	<i>Blu-ray</i>

If you look back at the formative writings of the 'Young Turk' critics involved in French journal *Cahiers du Cinéma*, Jacques Rivette was especially enamoured by the movies coming out of Japan in the 1950s. He wrote passionately on the work of Kenji Mizoguchi, whose work explores the humiliations and degradations suffered by women at the hands of men, the law, institutions and society at large. It makes his second feature, 1966's *The Nun*, feel like an earnest homage to the late master, even down to its flat framing and use of musical cues which draw on Asian instrumentation. The righteous anger found in Denis Diderot's 1760 novel makes its way to the screen in this intense and almost comically bleak admonition of the papacy which lands punch after punch. A couple decide to offload their daughter Suzanne (Anna Karina) on a nunnery and coerce her into accepting her vows – even though she claims not to be a believer.

What should be a life of spiritual harmony soon turns sour as Suzanne realises that she has become a prisoner to the Church. Her descent lands her as a plaything for the spiteful Mother Superior (Francine Bergé). Where some of Rivette's mid-career masterworks like *Céline and Julie Go Boating* and *Out 1* are radical and meandering, *The Nun* is rigid, curt and fiercely focused. Suzanne isn't against anyone or anything, she merely desires her personal freedom. Yet it seems wherever she is and whoever she's with, happiness is the first thing snatched away from her. The film was something of a costly shambles for Rivette and it may have been the reason he opted for low budgets and high levels of freedom in his later works. It does, however, offer a fine showcase for Karina, who loses herself in the central role of a woman desperate for reasons to stay alive. **DAVID JENKINS**



Smithereens

<i>Directed by</i> SUSAN SEIDELMAN	1982
<i>Starring</i> SUSAN BERMAN BRAD RIJN RICHARD HELL	<i>Released</i> 27 AUGUST
	<i>Blu-ray</i>

Susan Seidelman made history in 1982 when her debut feature became the first independent American film to play in competition at the Cannes Film Festival. She might have missed out on the Palme d'Or, but her remarkable post-punk tale of a narcissistic young woman navigating the complexity of New York City endures. *Smithereens* stars Susan Berman as Wren, an aspiring musician and schemer from New Jersey – at the start of the film, she swipes a pair of sunglasses from a woman waiting on a subway platform, and makes a quick getaway as Glenn Mercer's guitar-heavy score kicks into next gear. She encounters "Paul from Montana", an artist living in a van who quickly latches onto her, but Wren's more interested in pursuing Eric, the ex-singer of the band Smithereens.

There's something endearing about Wren despite her many flaws – she's unapologetically in control of her own sexuality and destiny, even when in free-fall thanks to her lackadaisical approach to paying rent and turning up to her job at a Xerox store. "I'm really rotten. I'm disgusting," she tells Paul, but there's also a striking kind of vulnerability about her – she tumbles around the city scraping up her knees and sleeping on subway trains, carrying her earthly possessions around in plastic bags. The men in her life always want something from her, and Wren wrestles with the notion that she's supposed to play the system to get what she wants. Seidelman captures the post-punk sensibility with scenes bathed in blood red lighting and wry, messy match cuts. The world bites Wren – she bites back. A key text in the female director canon and in the annals of independent American cinema – *Smithereens* is more than worthy of its new release, and will hopefully inspire nasty women for years to come.

HANNAH WOODHEAD



Oleanna

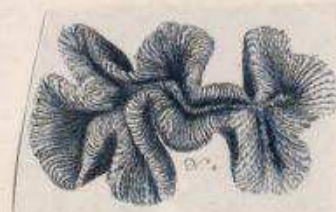
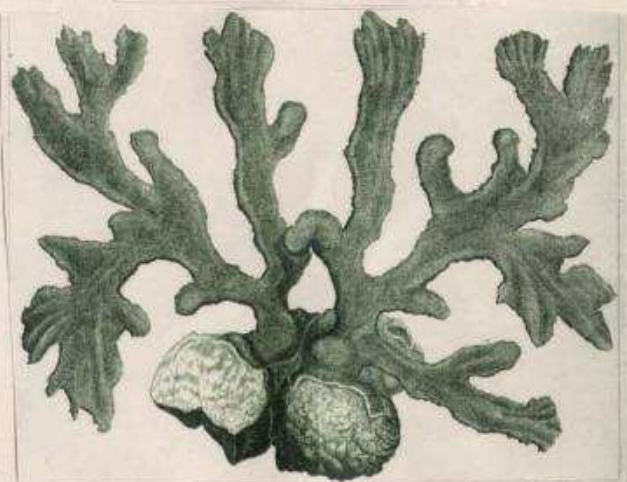
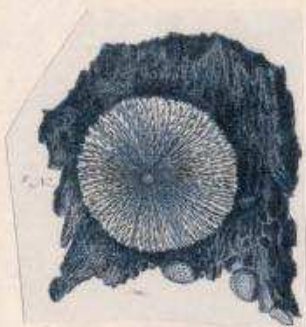
<i>Directed by</i> DAVID MAMET	1994
<i>Starring</i> WILLIAM H MACY DEBRA EISENSTADT DIEGO PINEDA	<i>Released</i> 20 AUGUST
	<i>Blu-ray</i>

This is a very welcome re-release of David Mamet's utterly riveting screen adaptation of his own scabrous stage play, *Oleanna*. Now stay with me here, but the film comprises entirely of two characters talking in a single room, but the way it's written, the way the words are intoned by the actors, and the delicately-handled staging techniques make this far more exciting than any effects-driven blockbuster. The film was written as a response to a decision made by the US Supreme Court in regard to adjudicating cases on sexual assault, specifically that the weight of the testimony should err towards the side of the (usually female) victim. The film opens with Carol (Debra Eisenstadt), dressed up in a oversized green army surplus jacket, haranguing her professor, John (William H Macy), in the hallway of an illustrious liberal arts college. She complains that he has given her a bad grade, and that maybe this is his fault for not teaching her properly. He retorts by suggesting it's not his job to spew facts which are then regurgitated into essays – but to provoke and tease, to promote independent thought.

The conversation develops and John gets animated, lightly manhandling Carol when she threatens to leave. Matters are left at an intriguing impasse, but Carol, it transpires, wants to continue the discussion on her own terms. Each syllable they utter has the venom of a snakebite, and the power dynamic seems to shift back and forth between hurried breaths. The dialogue is immaculately crafted, even down to the cosmetic stutters and repetitions which lend the film an experimental artifice. The arguments too veer nicely wide of polemic, even if Mamet has since aired opinions which, shall we say, make the balance here seem quite radical.

DAVID JENKINS

FARO



MOST

FRUITS

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OF THE
SEA



*Wet kisses
from Faro!*

xxx

Sophie



Little White Lies

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LONDON

Journeys: Fårö

A trip to Ingmar Bergman's island hideaway provides a chance to reflect on the Swedish master's complicated legacy.

“Fuck the canon, because the canon's been fucking you for years.” These words from poet-activist So Mayer came to mind as I closed in on Fårö, the remote Swedish island (population: 505) where Ingmar Bergman lived and worked from the 1960s until his death in 2007. He is buried in the peaceful graveyard of Fårö Church, separated by only a small rock wall from frolicking black sheep in an adjacent field. Fårö is such a tranquil and beautiful place, its roads flanked by glistening water, windmills and seemingly endless fields, that it makes one wonder why Bergman used it as the backdrop for grotesque human misery in *Persona*, *Shame*, *Through a Glass Darkly*, *The Passion of Anna* and *Scenes from a Marriage*. Truly, this discordance bears out of the line from John Milton's 'Paradise Lost': “The mind is its own place and can make a heaven out of hell and a hell out of heaven.” Bergman has made an advance by spreading his hell-mind across a paradise, for his ghost still casts a pall across the island. But more on that shortly.

Since 2007, the annual Bergman Week festival has expanded to take a more legacy-focused look at the late auteur's career. This year's jubilee edition marked 100 years since Sweden's most famous filmmaking son was born in Uppsala. As well as films by and about him, the festival is made up of talks, safaris and a fascinating tour of Bergman's house in Hammars, preserved like a tomb as a testament to its owner's fusty yet comfortable '70s taste. Orange, cream, green velvet and lots of wooden shelving units dominate a bungalow which sprawls outwards, windows affording calming views of scrubby trees and on the horizon of the Baltic Sea. Bergman was allowed to build this house closer to the beach than local laws permit because, as one of our Swedish minders says, “When you're Ingmar Bergman, you're above the law.”


Further insights into the type of man he was are gained over the course of the tour. Each room served a special purpose. There is no table in the lounge because you couldn't bring coffee in there. If you wanted one, you had to go into the kitchen. A portrait of the artist as a control freak emerges, but so too do painful relics – scrawled handwriting on a table beside the bed where he lay dying, a lover's diary written in red and black ink on the study door; a code of hearts, circles and crosses. To mark the day when the lover in question, his muse Liv Ullmann, left for good, there are two intertwined hearts: one happy, one sad.

Drinking in so many personal artifacts feels like being present during the early days of the mythologising of a space. It is easy to imagine tours taking place 100 years into the future with the guide talking in more formal language than the wonderfully cavalier Kerstin Kalström, who

knew Bergman personally and takes infectious glee in dropping salacious gobbets. None of this would be happening if it wasn't for the Norwegian billionaire Hans Gude Gudesen, who stepped in with his largesse on hearing that the Swedish government had put the house on the market. He rarely comes to visit and dispenses instructions on the upkeep of the house to Kalström. She reveals that he is not even a Bergman fan.

Back to the ghost. The aesthetic of Fårö is like living in Bergman iconography. With this blending of real and fictional landscapes comes the eerie sense that one has slipped through a glass darkly into a netherworld where our most acute skill as humans is to psychologically torment each other. As in any supernatural story, there are locations where his presence is particularly strong. His house, of course, and his private cinema in Dämba where I watch 35mm prints of *Shame* and *Persona* and where he would watch films every day at 3pm. It's a tiny detached space, a renovated barn furnished with only 15 chairs which – props to the man – are luxuriously upholstered personal armchairs. Bergman's favourite chair is reserved for his ghost, sitting parallel to a tapestry by Anita Grede called 'The Magic Flute on Fårö' which depicts a mixture of images from his 1974 film and the local landscape. Hovering in an almost translucent state in the centre is Bergman himself, reaching a flower-holding hand out not so much out to touch a naked woman but to *enter* her.

In the Bergman Week programme, artistic director Emma Gray Munthe's introduction paid lip-service to the post-#MeToo era as a time to thoughtfully reevaluate rather than mindly celebrate supposed male geniuses. This spirit of enquiry was most apparent in the decision to programme *The Undeclared Woman* by journalist-filmmaker Marie Nyrreröd. The documentary focuses on Gun Grut, one of the many women in Bergman's life, and mother to his son Ingmar Bergman Jr. It is a character study of a woman who did not define herself in relation to this celebrated man, but it also exposes his values. “I've been lazy about family,” he admits in Nyrreröd's interview footage, “I haven't bothered about my family. I never have.”

Does it matter if you share an artist's values or not? Is it important if you agree with the way they chose to live their life? If their work is mounted upon a presumption that the self-exposing psychology depicted is universal, then yes. Bergman was a wildly prolific and deeply disciplined man. Some of his films I like; many I haven't seen. There is no escaping his ghost – not on Fårö and not in the film industry, where he is routinely namechecked by contemporary filmmakers as a source of inspiration (Mia Hansen-Løve's next film is called *Bergman Island*). Yet despite this looming canonical relevance, Mayer's words still ring true 



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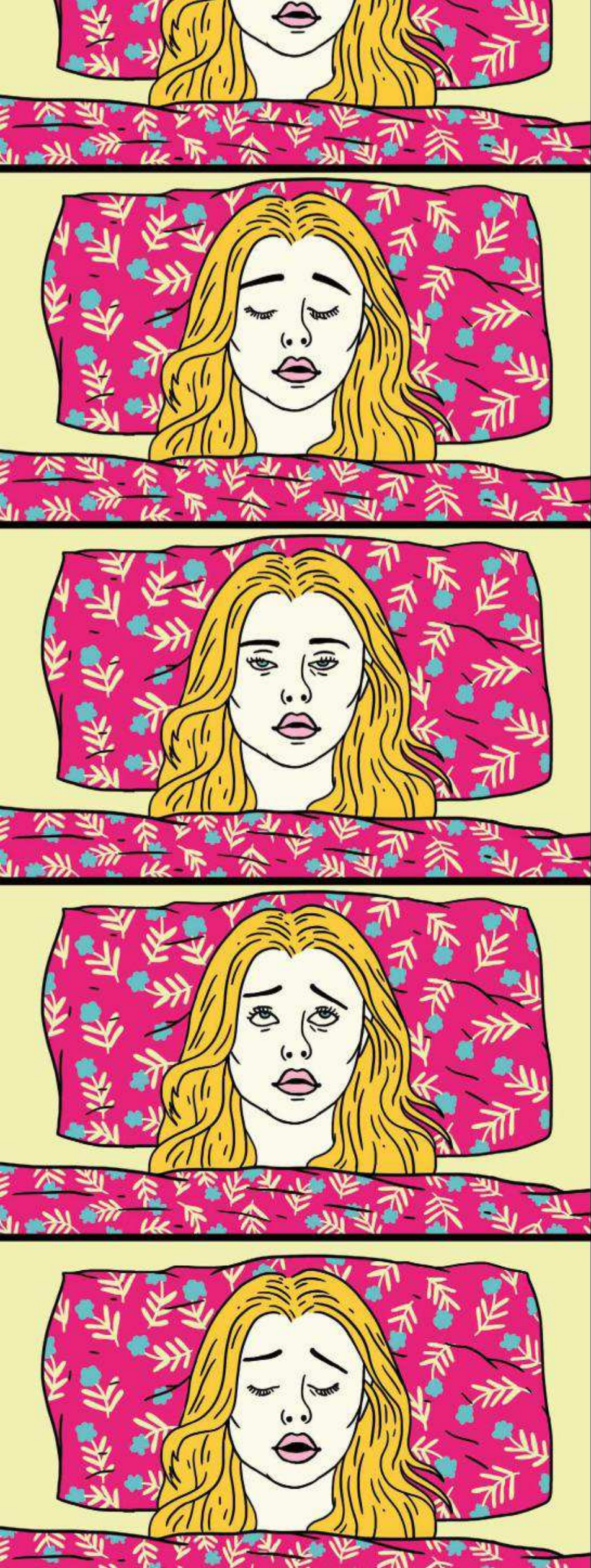
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Little White Lies

Published by TCO

Little White Lies – Huck – 71a

Words, pictures, thanks... Mark Asch, Anton Bitel, Sofia Bonati, Jake Cunningham, Ben Giles, Caroline Golum, Simran Hans, Glenn Heath Jr, Thomas Hobbs, Trevor Johnston, Eve Jones, Elena Lazic, Manuela Lazic, Christina Newland, Liz Seabrook, Zach Sebastian, Josh Slater-Williams, Justine Smith, Matt Turner, Luke Walkley, Beth Webb.

Special thanks: Giles Fouhy of Saint Barnabas Church, Dalston

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The articles appearing in this publication reflect the opinions of their respective authors and not necessarily those of the publishers or editorial team.

TCOLondon 2018 (copyright)

Published by
TCOLondon
71a Leonard Street
London EC2A 4QS UK
+44 (0) 207-729-3675
tcolondon.com
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LWLies is published
five times a year

Advertise in LWLies
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+44 (0) 207-729-3675

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Distribution
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Printed by Buxton Press

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LWLies:

What do you love about movies?

Sasha Lane:

I love that movies make me feel like I'm part of a different world, whether I'm watching them or acting in them. I can remove myself from wherever I am and just dive into something else. If I really feel connected to it then it's even better because you're never alone when you watch a great movie – you feel like you're a part of someone else's world.

Chloë Grace Moretz:

I love that, when you're watching a movie, you can step inside someone else's shoes and change the way your brain perceives an entire situation. You can grow emotionally through watching the performances and the story that's being told in front of you.

