



Reel/Buzz

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PALACE NOVA

WALLIS

President's Report

Greetings, FilmSoccers. This is my first President's report, having taken over the reins from Susan Love who, like many of the club's stalwarts, has regretfully left us for higher things. We still have a few Thursday night films left to show you (see details elsewhere) and, such is our enthusiasm, a number of other events and potential events as well:

Projectionist training II

Find out what really happens in the smallest room in the house. 7pm, Wednesday 18th October, at the Union Cinema.

Wild Spaces 2000

Three days of videos, satirical and informative, on environmental issues. A joint event with Wild Spaces. 7-10pm Friday 3rd, 2-5pm Saturday 4th & Sunday 5th of November. A small fee will apply.

End-of-Year Bash

Probably involving a free preview at the Palace (who are always very generous to us) and free drinks. In the week following exams.

Anime Video Day

A joint event with the Japan-Australia Friendship Association, some time during the holidays.

Weekend Away

The FilmSoc traditionally has a beach-retreat during the summer break. We'll probably combine this with choosing the films for 1st term 2001, film-watching, some experimental "How does this camera thing work?" filming, and various holiday-type things.

Watch your email during the break for further information, as well as for the usual film reviews and so forth. Here's the catch: while the FilmSoc has many

fine traditions, ongoing activities and a rewarding social scene, many of the people who created these can no longer maintain them. We urgently require new participants. I'm not aiming to load anyone with work who is not prepared for it, and the work is light anyway, but **WE NEED PEOPLE TO TAKE AN INTEREST IN THE CLUB.** (Thanks to those who have and do.) The last committee meeting during teaching this year will be at 1pm on Tuesday 24th October, North-South Dining Room, level 4 of the Union Building. Please come if you can, and also to any happenings during the break.

Ave

Guy Olding

Ed's Buzz

Hi there filmbuffs,

This is the last Reelbuzz before the break. It has been fabulous to serve you all with reviews and other vital info over the year. I'm glad that more and more people show an interest in reviewing movies but we are always in need of another keen eye and pen so drop me a line if you want to become more active in the Film Society.

Our screenplay competition has generated very little interest, so the soundtracks to *Man On the Moon* and *Sample People* are still around if anyone comes up with an idea for a short film within the next few weeks. And don't forget that there are movie passes to be won every Thursday night. All you need to do is be there.

If you haven't enjoyed the films we have shown this year, or if you have suggestions for improvement, come along and help us choose new films at the next weekend away. Hope to see you all return to the Film Soc next year!



Reviews

Battlefield Earth

Directed by Roger Christian.
Starring John Travolta.

There are bad films and then there are Bad Films. *Battlefield Earth* falls into the latter category, which is all for the best, really. Adapted from the first



half of L. Ron Hubbard's mammoth pulp SF novel and starring prominent Scientologist John Travolta, this is easily the best Bad Film made in years. The script is terrible, the acting struggles to keep up with the script and director Roger Christian keeps the camera on an angle for so much of the film it's likely to cause serious neck damage.

But it's also strangely endearing. Scenery chewing abounds, mostly from Travolta but that's no surprise, as does derivative music, nonsensical coincidences and convenient plot devices. Nothing much about this film makes sense. Yet its simplistic tale of human rebellion against the evil Psychlo race, who have enslaved us



for the last however many generations, is ineptly directed with such passion (too bad about the lack of talent) that I can't help but think of Ed Wood. This is a shockingly bad film from start to finish, but if you enjoy *Plan 9 From Outer Space*, yelling out the worst lines in time with the movie, and generally laughing yourself silly at one of the worst films ever made, then this is for you. Cultdom beckons.

Craig

Grass

Directed by Robert Mann.

It's always a pleasure for me to watch a documentary that attempts to strike a balance between information and entertainment, and succeeds. And for me, *Grass* succeeded.

The informative aspect of the film was a chronological review of the history of marijuana use and its prohibition in the US throughout the 1900's. It traces the first significant appearance of the drug in the country around the turn of the century with the flood of immigrant labourers from Mexico into the southern states. It follows the evolution of the drug's place in society and the way conservative elements of American society have reacted to it. The film is notable in that it gives far less attention to the users of the drug than it does to the people who outlawed it and their propaganda.

The biggest single focus is the way the fear, uncertainty, and doom propoganda evolved with the changing American society and the changing patterns of marijuana use. In this aspect, the film is insightful and seems to take a cynical, detached attitude that one might find absent in a 'I wanna smoke some pot you fascist', 'underground hippie flick' (which *Grass* is certainly not). Indeed, the film is decidedly non-pro-marijuana, rather pro-non-criminalisation, if that makes any sense.

On the entertainment front, this film is a treat. Not rolling in the aisles material, but a steady stream of chuckles. Visually, the film is to a great extent made up of archival footage, with many gems uncovered. Aside from the inherent hilarity of much of the footage, it was pieced together with an eye for humour as well. I especially liked the way out-takes and unedited footage was often incorporated, giving a wonderful sense of context that is often missing in montages of archival footage. Woody Harrelson's narration was pleasant and unobtrusive, and his material was well written. Also there were many nice animated computer graphics interspersed with the archival footage, providing amusement and some glue for the narrative.

In a nutshell, *Grass* has something for anyone interested in documentary as a film genre, social history in the US, or the devil weed itself. My only complaint is the (undenied) US-centrism of the film. I'll give it four skulls.

Matt Lowry



Space Cowboys

Directed by Clint Eastwood.

Starring Clint Eastwood, Tommy Lee Jones (or Yummy Lee Jones as I like to call him), James Garner, Donald Sutherland.

Space Cowboys is a great excuse to get four excellent 'older' actors together. Sure it's a light comedy, but it's kinda' fun! If you've seen a preview you have got a pretty good idea of the film (great to see a film that lives up to its preview, isn't it?).

Dr. Francis 'Frank' Corvin (Eastwood) was head of team Daedalus, the airforce project training the first men to go into space. Before it was completed, the space programme was handed to NASA and a chimp went into space instead. Forty years later this still hurts, and when Frank is contacted by NASA to help them rescue a crippled Russian satellite, he cuts a deal for the original Daedalus team to go into space. Then follows an amusing *Blues Brothers*-type set of scenes where Frank gets the old boys back together, and we get to see how cool and feisty they are. The men go through their training at NASA and then shoot off into space. The film falters during the training sequences, but the final space segment is quite exciting.

The IMDb have pages and pages of technical errors to



film may frustrate you. I would also have liked to see such fine actors extending themselves a bit. However, this is a fun light comedy.

ES

The Emperor and the Assassin

Directed by Chen Kaige.

Starring Gong Li.

In 221 BC, king Ying Zheng (Li Xuejian) of the Qin kingdom is engaged in his ancestral crusade to unite the seven kingdoms of China under his rule. His mistress, the Lady Zhao (Gong Li), turns her skill in intrigue to aid him but finds herself increasingly sympathising with Qin's enemies. Other players in this epic nation-sweeping

drama are the proud but ineffectual prince of Yan (Sun Zhou), easily manipulated by Ying and Lady Zhao, the devious would-be usurper, Marquis Changxin (Wang Zhiwen) and the world-weary assassin Jing Ke (Zhang Fengyi). The king moves from being visionary and ambitious to being completely



obsessed by his goal, all the while becoming more isolated from his friends: erratic, suspicious, vengeful and brutal.

My friend, with whom I saw this film, commented that it was a poor-man's Shakespeare. The epic-sweep-of-history is driven by the characters and there is also a five-act structure. Yet, somehow, the film doesn't quite sit right. Where Shakespeare would have presented the characters and driven the story with taut dialogue, Chen Kaige uses the visual medium, one tense tableau after another. What you end up with is a film comprising a series of poignant moments. That said, the visual quality is fantastic, from the reconstructed ancient cities and palaces to the massed battle-scenes (I found myself saying 'Bloody hell, look at that!' under my breath several times).

This is worth seeing for the sheer scope and ambition of the project, depicting the foundation of an empire with a cast of millions, its battles, political machinations and the evolution of the characters. However, there are reservations. For one thing, it is very long, 160 minutes. You'll need a fair bit of patience to get through it, as well as a degree of concentration to follow what different people are up to.

Guy

Programme

The Dish

Directed by Rob Sitch.

Starring Sam Neill.

If you haven't heard a lot about *The Dish* already, you haven't been paying attention. I was listening to Santo Cilauro give an interview on Triple J just moments ago.

Santo alleged the film was a drama, but I spent a significant part of it laughing. Apparently Australian drama is inherently amusing. The movie is not the slightest bit scientifically oriented, which is a relief, but don't invite any geeky types to the post movie coffee - they'll be too irritating.

The Dish is based on the true story of Australia's involvement in receiving and transmitting the television images of man's first steps on the moon. The images were relayed from the Parkes radio telescope, picturesquely located in the middle of a sheep paddock somewhere. The reason for this is illustrated during the movie with the aid of a basketball (no I don't mean why its in the middle of a sheep paddock!).

In the movie... everything is about to go wrong because of an oversight in maintenance. Apparently Parkes did actually lose Apollo 11 during its mission, but the boys at Working Dog used a little artistic license when it comes to how.

The Dish is augmented with a very special version of backyard cricket, and two romantic comedy side plots. One of these manages a sort of philosophical segue into the overall plot climax, which I always find a little less than satisfactory. Go and see *The Dish*, I can't think of a film you're more likely to enjoy!

The Dish is produced by Working Dog, producers of *The Castle*. It's directed by Rob Sitch (again, as for *The Castle*) and was apparently written before *The Castle*. The cast includes Sam Neill, Kevin Harrington (Sea Change), Tom Long (also from Sea Change), Patrick Warburton, Genevieve Mooy, Tayler Kane, Bille Brown, and Roy Billing.

David Ireland

All films shown in the Union Cinema, Level 5, Union Building. Free for Film Society Members, \$3 others (includes membership).

WEEK 11, Thursday 19th October, 7 pm
Orlando (1992)



Directed by Sally Potter.

Based upon Virginia Woolf's novel; a comely, immortal youth experiences life from the point of view of both sexes as s/he moves through four centuries of social change.

With short: *The Match that Started My Fire*

A group of women recount their sexual awakenings.

WEEK 12, Thursday 26th October, 7:30pm

Japanese film in association with the Japan Australia Friendship Association (to be announced sometime very very soon, if not sooner) .

Editor: Sol
Contributors: Guy, Craig, Esther,
Matt Lowry and David Ireland