



Reel / Buzz

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PALACE NOVA

WALLIS

President's Report

Congratulations, you have just joined the most cultured, happening and dynamic club on campus, an association of people with a common interest in cinema. There have been university film clubs that have come and gone over the years (and don't be complacent and think that we're immune to fatal fizzling) but the current version, the Adelaide University Film Society, has been round since 1996.

Membership is a rare experience that you will treasure for as long as you remember how much you paid and hopefully a lot longer once you get into the social side of things. And what do you get for your money? **Free films**, every Thursday, every week during semester - the programme for term 1 is at the back of this edition. You get access to **email discussion lists** and a newsletter, *Reelbuzz* (which you're holding - feel the quality): these will give you news, views and reviews and all the opportunities that you could want to express your own opinions. The club archive, established last year, includes magazines like the cerebral **Cinema Papers**, film production notes and previous years' reviews. As if this isn't enough, we also organise events such as paint-balling and weekends at exotic locations like the beach and the Hills.

The club is run as inclusively as possible, especially in choosing the programme each term. **Projecting** films and **reviewing** are done by whoever's willing - this could mean you! If you're interested in anything the club does (or ought to do) or want to associate with people whose idea of a good time is discussing cinema, don't be shy.

Hang round for drinks after a film or come to the Tuesday committee meetings.

Guy Olding

Prez

Editor's Buzz

Welcome to you all, revered new members as well as familiar old ones! As the current editor of this publication, I would just like to let you know how much fun it is to see previews at 9.30 in the morning, write reviews and hunt good photos on the net. I spend between five and twenty hours working on *Reelbuzz* every month (the hours depend on how many times the computer decides to crash and lose all my work), which is hard but fun work. If you (yes, **you**) feel this is something that you would like to get involved in too, just come to one of our committee meetings, a Thursday night film or simply send me an email.

The address is: anna_solding@hotmail.com

Hope to see you around this year!

P.S. Keep an eye out for the cute Swedish film *Show Me Love* (the original title of which is *Fucking Amal*). Funnily enough the judges at the Oscars didn't approve of the f' word...



Editor: Sol
Contributors: Peter, Guy and Esther

Reviews

Traffic

Directed by Steven Soderbergh (*sex, lies & videotape*, *Out of Sight*, *Erin Brockovich*).

Starring Michael Douglas (lots of stuff), Benicio Del Toro (*The Usual Suspects*), Catherine Zeta-Jones (*Zorro*, *Entrapment*).

Was this supposed to be the film where Michael met Catherine? If it was, it must have been at the wrap-up party. Their two characters never meet; they could conceivably be in two separate films. Steven Soderbergh's long-winded analysis of the drug trade into the USA has two completely separate plots, presumably covering the 'demand' and the 'supply' side of the drug trade. But unlike something like *The English Patient* where the two streams are eventually interwoven into one, Soderbergh's streams continue along on their separate paths, never to meet except in passing.

On the 'demand' side, Michael Douglas plays Robert Wakefield, newly appointed anti-drug czar in the US. Douglas' character is used as a vehicle for teaching the audience large amounts of stats about the drug trade as he moves from place to place being briefed on aspects of his new position.

This film's ancestry as a Channel 4 documentary is painfully obvious as each new scene is introduced with an overlay, like "El Paso Correction Center, El Paso, Texas", followed immediately by the dialogue, "Welcome to El Paso" and an outside shot of the Center with the name on the wall! There are more subtle ways to introduce facts to the audience. The second reason for Wakefield's existence is that (surprise!) his daughter Caroline (Erika Christensen) is becoming a heroin addict, with the help of her friend Seth.

Unfortunately, I didn't catch the name of the actor playing Seth (some reviewer I am!), but he (along with Del Toro) has one of the few interesting characters in the film. Christensen acts well but sadly for her is only handed a cliché one-dimensional character by the writers. Through Caroline and Seth we get the writers' opinion on the causes of the trade (bored, rich kids apparently), and are handed the moralistic message, "do drugs and you too could descend from model student to screwing a dealer for hits". This plot-line has the bonus that it actually reaches a conclusion. Of

course, it's the typical Hollywood one.

On the 'supply' side, we have the slightly bent but with-a-heart-of-gold cop Javier Rodriguez, played by Del Toro, who gives a good multi-faceted performance (so completely removed from the poncy Fenster from *The Usual Suspects* as to be unrecognisable). Javier treads the seedy and corrupt world of Mexican drug enforcement, where the cops are in league with the drug cartels and you have to decide whose side you are on. Javier is torn between love of justice, love of friends, money, and respect for authority.

Javier's story would have made a good film on its own. Sadly, I can't say the same about Zeta-Jones' character, Helena. The heavily-pregnant Jones plays the (initially naive) wife of a rich drug dealer. When he is arrested, she finds her world falling apart. The subplot allows some old-fashioned cops-and-robbers stuff, with shoot-outs, car bombs, snipers, witness protection deals, sleazy lawyers etc. However, Jones' character is really a small part that takes up a lot of screen time. One wonders if the part was beefed up due to the bankability of the actress. Helena undergoes a complete alignment change during the course of the film, but this is not explored in any depth. One might conclude that some women will do anything to keep their family together, but this is complete speculation given the shallow treatment of the character: there is no slow step-by-step change (cf. Caroline), no agonising, reasons or discussion. The character could happily have been left on the cutting room floor.

Then, with only one of the sub-plots resolved, the film ends (in the most saccharine-American way possible). I felt like there wasn't a beginning middle and an end to this film: just a middle, middle, and middle. Apparently US movie-goers either loved *Traffic* or walked out. *Traffic* is not a bad film (I give it 6/10), but I just don't know what the fuss is about.

Meanwhile, the war on drugs continues...

Peter-the-virgin-film-reviewer

Get Carter

Directed by Stephen T. Kay.

Starring Sylvester Stallone, Rachel Leigh Cook.

Las Vegas debt collector and general-purpose thug Jack Carter (Sylvester Stallone) returns home after many years' absence for the funeral of his brother who died in a car accident. Innately suspicious, Carter tries to learn if there was a more sinister reason for the death.

Revisiting the seedy world of his youth, he uncovers a grim exploitation ring involving his niece Doreen (Rachel Leigh Cook) and takes brutal revenge.

Stallone, goateed and granite-faced, carries off his role reasonably well, though his expression of character and emotions when with his niece varies from unconvincing to contrived and painful. Alan Cumming as Jeremy Kinnear has clearly found his niche playing smug slimy wimps with flaccid morals (he was previously Saturninus in *Titus*).

Based on the 1971 Michael Caine film (which I haven't seen so I can't make a comparison), this is the well-worn story of the outcast returning home to exact vengeance, redeeming himself from his estrangement by - perversely - using the violence that he aims to leave behind. There are lots of graphic fight scenes, car-chases, gritty seediness, immoral arrogance and corrupt opulence. There are also plenty of loose ends and obscurities, particularly Carter's relationship with his employers - why exactly are they so keen to kill him off? A dynamic just for the sake of it? The thing that the film attempts to distinguish itself by is its extremely arty style. Scenes are drenched in rich and pungent colour, reminiscent of films like *Chopper* and *Gossip*. Action is accompanied by energetic music. Jump-cuts are used liberally. One scene, between Carter and his adversaries in a hotel lift, is interspersed with forward cuts to what's about to happen, presumably to heighten tension. These techniques are generally effective though often rather self-conscious, unnecessary (the forward-cuts I've just mentioned serve to underline the pointlessness of the scene) and hackneyed. In general, *Get Carter* is watchable but not much more.

Guy Olding

Woman on Top

Directed by Fina Torres (*Oriana, Celestial Clockwork*).

Starring Penelope Cruz (*All About My Mother*), Murilo Benicio, Harold Perrineau Jr. (*Romeo + Juliet*), Mark Feuerstein.

This movie is a fairy tale, placed in a contemporary setting. Although it deals with relationships and cooking, don't expect *Eat Drink Man Woman*.

Woman on Top even begins, "Once upon a time...", and subsequent events follow the fairy tale formula. The story revolves around a beautiful wife (and exquisite cook) Isabella (Cruz) and her equally

beautiful husband Toninho (Benicio). Isabella has had severe motion sickness since childhood, and can only overcome it by being in charge of the motion: she leads while dancing, drives the car or motorscooter while her husband pillions, and must be on top during sex. Toninho is subjected to the taunts of his macho friends as he is led around the dance floor and driven around the streets. Caught by Isabella doing the horizontal lambada with a neighbour, Toninho wails, "I'm a man, I must be on top sometimes!" Isabella renounces her love with the aid of a tribal sea-goddess, leaves Toninho and flies to San Francisco (vomiting all the way); the fundamental crisis of the film is presented in the first five minutes, and the scene is set for the rest of the fairy tale.

Once there, Isabella stays with childhood friend and transvestite Monica (Harold Perrineau Jr) who acts as moral centrepiece and advice columnist for the rest of the film. Isabella begins teaching cookery class and here the director indulges in some fluffy surrealism; drops of Isabella's sweat revive wilted flowers, and her cooking aromas entrance hundreds of men to follow her pied piper-like along the streets. One of these zombies is TV-producer Cliff Lloyd (Mark Feuerstein) who offers her a TV show "Passion Food" which surprise, surprise, is an instant hit. Meanwhile, Toninho follows her to SF and crashes the set with his ever-present backup band to serenade her. The TV execs love it and put them on the show.

There's plenty of scope for tension between the two and much could have been done with that from this point on, but very little is made of it. Instead we slip back into standard Hollywood plot devices and characters. We have evil TV network execs, old vs new boyfriends to decide between, a transvestite in lingerie, and of course, more magic aromas. This part of the film abounds in missed opportunities. The film then winds towards the inevitable conclusion. If you don't know what that could be, consider the film opens with "once upon a time", so guess what it ends with. Why not do something different and have Isabella run off with Monica? Still, if you don't think about it too much, it's fun to watch. The leads are pleasant to look at: Cruz will keep the boys happy and Benicio will satisfy the girls (think Latin Russell Crowe, girls).

If you are a feminist, it will probably annoy you. It's probably best to see as a pleasant date movie. Especially if you are a cheating husband...

Peter-the-virgin-reviewer

Programme

TERM 1 2001

O'Week (19th-23rd February)

A CLOCKWORK ORANGE

6pm,

Tuesday 20th February, Rennie Lecture Theatre (Johnson Building, west of the Union Building)

Wednesday 21st February & Thursday 22nd February, Napier LG29.

THIS IS SPINAL TAP

6pm, Friday 23rd February, Napier LG29.

Unless otherwise specified, all films during term will be in the Union Cinema, level 5 Union building, Thursday, 7pm.

1st March

THE LAST WAVE (1977)

Directed by Peter Weir.

Starring Richard Chamberlain, Olivia Hamnett & Gulpilil.

Mystery thriller in which a lawyer defending Aborigines on a murder charge starts to experience a dream world of ancient and disturbing ritual.

plus short film

UN CHIEN ANDALOU (1929)

Directed by Luis Bunuel and Salvador Dali.

Dali: what do you expect?

Wednesday 7th March, 7pm

JAWS (1975)

Directed by Steven Spielberg.

Starring Roy Scheider, Robert Shaw, Richard Dreyfuss & Lorraine Gary.

The original and the best of the chomp-chomp series. Thrills and kills for the whole family.

plus short film

REMOVED (1999)

A pastiche of 70s soft porn films with the female figures bleached out. Deconstructed feminists only.

15th March

NOSFERATU (1922)

Directed by F.W. Murnau.

Starring Max Schreck, Alexander Granach & Gustav von Wangenheim.

The classic is back. Topical interest lies in this year's *Shadow of the Vampire* (starring John Malkovich) which presupposes that the events of *Nosferatu* are real.

plus short film

INAUGURATION OF THE PLEASURE DOME (1966)

Directed by Kenneth Anger.

Full-scale occult ritual.

22nd March

THE MAN IN THE WHITE SUIT (1951)

Directed by Alexander MacKendrick.

Starring Alec Guinness, Joan Green & Cecil Parker.

A laboratory dishwasher discovers a fabric that never wears out or gets dirty. Trying to sell his invention he is persecuted by both industrialists and trade unions. The same director and many of the same actors as last year's *The Ladykillers*.

plus short film

ACT OF GOD (1980)

Directed by Peter Greenaway.

Short doco about victims of lightning strikes with that mystifying Greenaway style.

29th March

KISS ME DEADLY (1955)

Directed by Robert Aldrich.

Starring Ralph Meeker.

Based on a novel by the gangster/private eye sleazemonger Mickey Spillane. Classic film noir. A major source for *Pulp Fiction*.

plus short film

L'ETOILE DE MER (1928)

An example of Man Ray's experimental cinematic techniques.

5th April

FALSTAFF (1967)

Directed, written by and starring Orson Welles. Also starring Jeanne Moreau, Margaret Rutherford & John Gielgud.

A film focusing on the flamboyant but ultimately tragic character from Shakespeare's *Henry IV* parts 1 and 2. One of the last films Welles directed and reputedly the best-realised after *Citizen Kane*.

plus short film

KING OF THE CATS (1984)

About what we all suspect cats are really up to.