

Ree / Buzz

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PALACE NOVA

WALLIS

President's Report - or not?

For some obscure reason, unknown to the rest of the Film Society (but it better be a good one!), our President has decided not to spread his light in this edition so instead you'll have to put up with me. As seems to be the norm in this powerful position, I urge you to come and see some of the exciting features we have lined up for you, not to mention the riveting short films. You'll find the programme for term IV at the back of this issue and I would especially direct your attention to the Swedish film *Persona* (Ingmar Bergman is one of the greats, didn't you know, and I'm not biased!) and *Alice*, which both seem worth a small trip to the cinema. The short film by W.D. Griffith should be interesting and *Fantabiblical* sounds like fun to me. Last week of this term we have lined up a whole bunch of shorts to make you forget about looming exams and essays that should have been handed yesterday.

One extra good reason to turn up to the screenings this semester (apart from all the great films you get to watch for free) is the fact that our sponsor Palace Nova Eastend Cinemas have been kind enough to give us a whole heap of free passes, of which we'll raffle a few at the end of every session. We (the hard working committee, that is) are also trying to organise some kind of end of year bash, when we can all get together and see a free movie. Keep an eye on the discussion list for further developments.

As usual, the film soc is also planning to go away for a weekend during the holidays. Anyone can come and all you need to bring is a sunny disposition (I don't have to tell you to bring videos coz I know you will anyway). Time and place will be announced on the discussion list as soon as it has been decided on.

Finally, I'd like to take this opportunity to ask all of you to think about becoming more involved in the AUFS. We need you! Committee meetings are at 1

pm every Monday in the Canon Poole Room, level 5 of the Union Building. Just turn up. If there are many of us sharing the tasks, we all have to do less each. I'm sure the philosopher would say there's logic in that. Thanks to those of you who already help out or have offered to help in any way.

Good viewing



Editor's Little Note

Hi all you film lovers out there,

Your editor is back from her trip, even more freckled than when she left. I'd recommend southern Utah to anyone, the landscape was just amazing. But I still have to say that, in summer, there is no better place to be than Sweden.

On the West Bank I made a few interesting friends (see photo) and I would have loved to get to know them better but before I knew it I was back in Adelaide, writing reviews as if I hadn't even been away. How strange life is sometimes. Just like films, really. There are several good ones screening at Palace Nova at the moment, so go hide in the dark and forget about all your worries for a couple of hours. I think *Lantana* is one of the best Australian films I have ever seen (and I'm not quite in my forties yet). *La Spagnola* is also well worth a look, about immigrant Australians struggling to get by in a small town some decades ago.



Reviews

À Ma Sœur! (For My Sister! aka Fat Girl)

Directed by Catherine Breillat.

Starring Anaïs Reboux & Roxane Mesquida.

Just how confronting do you like your art films? Breillat, who has already achieved notoriety from the real-life sex scenes of *Romance*, now turns to the relationship between sisters and adolescent sexuality. Elena (Mesquida) is 15, aggressive and very aware of her physical attractiveness; her 13 year old sister Anaïs (Reboux) is podgy and indifferent. On a beach resort in Saintonge (north of Bordeaux) they are in each other's company constantly as they share a room and their parents only let them out of the residence together. Elena calculatedly flirts with the first eligible man she sees, Italian law student Fernando (Libero de Rienzo). This half of the film is quite discomforting to watch. The conversations of the sisters and the lovers, varying between intimacy, manipulation and mutual torment, are so minutely observed that they're almost embarrassing to witness. The extended seduction scene is shown with an unaverted eye: it is not only very explicit but has uncomfortable plausibility to some inadmirable aspects of human behaviour, Elena's naïve temptress act and Fernando's inability to stop himself. However, the sexual theme is definitely inferior to that of the sisters' relationship. Anaïs, being younger and introverted, is assumed to need Elena's support; Elena's determination to prove her sexuality is just one aspect of her desire to differentiate herself from Anaïs and to dominate her.

The film's second half strips away the dynamic structures, climaxing in the random brutality of the conclusion which ironically - even perversely - reinforces the sisters' psychological interdependence. This film is barely watchable to start with. I'd nominate it as a Date Film From Hell. However, it's notable for its simplicity and plausibility in presenting a relationship that is complex and driven to an extreme.

After a gap of several days I can say it's actually worth seeing. Just don't expect to enjoy yourself.

Guy

Nurse Betty

Directed by Neil LaBute.

Starring Renée Zellweger, Morgan Freeman and Greg Kinnear.

Anyone who has seen a few scenes from 'Days of Our Lives' or any other American soap opera will find themselves chuckling during the film *Nurse Betty*. But this film is no comedy and has a much darker side that tries to explore the area where fantasy and reality become obscured.

Betty Sizemore, superbly played by Renée Zellweger is a small-town waitress and devoted viewer of 'A Reason to Love'. This daytime soap opera about life and love in a hospital is Betty's fantasy world, which helps her to cope with the reality of her bad marriage and the fact that she never managed to become a nurse herself.



When she accidentally witnesses the violent murder of her no-good husband who has been involved in a drug deal, Betty is traumatised into a state of 'dissociative fugue', which erases her past and transfers her into a new identity and new reality. She 'becomes' Nurse Betty, a character from the soap opera, and sets off for Los Angeles in search of 'her' true love Dr. Ravell (Greg Kinnear). Through a series of events straight out of a soap opera Betty gets a job as a nurse and eventually comes face to face with the actor who plays Dr. Ravell in 'A Reason to Love' and fantasy collides with reality.

Meanwhile as a balance to Betty's alternate world, the two hit men (Morgan Freeman and Chris Rock) who killed her husband, provide dark offbeat humour as they desperately search for her and the drugs they believe she has stolen, following her trail more by luck than anything else. Finally all the threads of the story are pulled together as reality emerges again, before *Nurse Betty* concludes with a true soap opera ending. Neil LaBute has managed to blur the lines between the real world and the world of the soap opera quite successfully for most of the film, however three deliberately violent scenes are not quite 'over the top'

enough and seem too real. Overall an enjoyable film, original and deserving of the Best Screenplay Award at this year's Cannes International Film Festival but still not one to put on the 'must see' list.

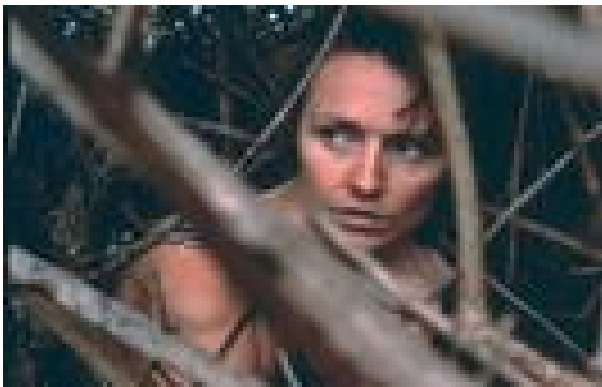
Uncle Al

Lantana

Directed by Ray Lawrence.
Starring Anthony LaPaglia, Kerry Armstrong, Rachael Blake, Geoffrey Rush & Barbara Hershey.

This is Lawrence's much-awaited second film, 16 years after the surreal *Bliss*. *Lantana* is realist, concerning relationships under stress and the role of trust. Leon Zat (LaPaglia) is a Sydney detective married to Sonja (Armstrong). Suffering a mid-life crisis, he has a fling with Jane O'May (Blake), herself separated from Pete (Glenn Robbins). Jane's neighbours are Nik and Paula (Vince Colosimo, Daniella Farinacci), unsophisticated, hardworking and devoted to their children. Valerie Somers (Hershey) is a therapist whose marriage to academic John Knox (Rush) has become almost frozen since the murder of their daughter two years earlier. Initially separate, these characters come together in a series of interactions. Valerie's disappearance throws the strained relationships into crisis.

It is hard to describe *Lantana* without making it sound like a soap-opera or a murder-mystery. It's neither: it's about what happens a decade or so after boy-meets-girl. As such, it probably speaks most to the over-40s (doubtless the source of its rave-reviews to date) but the under-30s might find the mid-life thing a bit tiresome. The film's strengths are its visual style, the performances (though there are a couple of duds - whose idea was it to put Glenn Robbins in a serious role?), and some of the individual scenes are outstanding. The interactions are subtly and effectively handled to show how one character understands another's experience and interprets it according to their own situation. Unfortunately, some of the interactions and coincidences are a bit too neat, to the point that I started expecting them, and some are just superfluous. The ending is a



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few scenes too long drawn-out and is too well rounded-off which I felt undermined the theme of the whole film, that relationships are works in progress.

Well done, but less profound than it thinks it is. I'll give it 3 out of 5 petals. (The lantana is a noxious weed with colourful flowers. Je ne sais pas pourquoi.)

Guy

The Bank

Directed by Robert Connelly.
Starring Anthony LaPaglia and David Wenham.

This is a good looking Australian movie with an impressive sound track. It is about 'hating banks', a kind of modern day Merchant of Venice with revenge approaching from 'the chaotic-feminine' aspect. It's also a modern day David & Goliath story about felling the giant with technological skill. 'The mathematician', Jim Doyle (David Wenham) masters Chaos theory and entices Simon O'Reilly (Anthon LaPaglia) 'the banker' aboard a ride to glory.

The Bank is dark and challenging. The humour continually highlights these qualities. It's tale is one of morality, about the elasticity of ethics; of non-conjugal sex and of white-collar crime justified. It approaches the big issues as it juxtaposes Nietzsche's 'ubermensch' with 'the little man' and his whining morality. "Stop whining like a woman" says 'the banker' when 'the mathematician' makes a plea for 'the loser'. 'The losers' in this movie are a couple (Steve Rodgers and Mandy McElhinney) who borrow money from the bank. They 'trust' the bank and naively do not check the details of their foreign currency loan which has apparently led to the demise of their business.

It is about 'political correctness' or at least the lack of it, especially in regard to 'losers'. In it's blackest moment this movie jokes mabout death, by drowning, of the son of the couple of 'losers'. The 'search for the lost boy' is superb filming. It also resonates powerfully with the Australian experience of 'the lost boy'. The acting is good. Jim's girlfriend, Michelle (Sibylla Budd) is smart, sexy and strong. If Simon is 'God' "with a better suit" Jim (David Wenham) is 'Jesus Christ' with that "liberal bleeding heart of.." his. "You need grit to make a pearl." and LaPaglia delivers. The one time that Simon hesitates, while out of character, enables an interesting cinematic experience as Simon responds to Jim's challenge, "Is that your big swinging dick I can hear shrivelling up?" Yes that strange (to me, at least) bit of imagery is in this film. I recommend it.

Kaliope

Programme Term IV

PROGRAMME

Term 4, 2001

Films are screened every Thursday at 7pm, in the Union Cinema, level 5, the Union Building. Free for members; membership is \$3 at the door.

4th October:

The Long Riders (1980)

Directed by Walter Hill (*48 Hours, Last Man Standing*).

Starring David, Robert & Keith Carradine, Stacy & James Keach, Randy & Dennis Quaid and Nicholas & Christopher Guest.



A stylish and atmospheric Western about the Jesse James gang startin' out, gettin'

even, an' goin' home agin. Notable for castin' four sets of brothers as four sets of brothers, its climactic slo-mo shoot-out and Ry Cooder's music.

Plus short film: *The Battle at Elderbush Gulch* (1913)

A very early Western from pioneering film-maker D.W. Griffith (*Birth of a Nation*).

1th October:

Persona (1966)

Directed by Ingmar Bergman.

Starring Bibi Andersson & Liv Ullman.

An actress' nervous breakdown causes her to become speechless, undermining her nurse's confident personality. A commentary on the subversiveness of communication, including the film itself.

Plus short film: *What on Earth?*

Martians come to Earth to investigate the dominant species, cars.

18th October:

Alice (1988)

A combined live-action and claymation version of *Alice in Wonderland* from Czech master-animator Jan Svankmajer. Dark, surreal and grotesque in just the way Disney isn't.

Plus short film: *Fantabiblical*

Animated sci-fi satirising Bible stories. From Bruno Bozzetto, maker of *Allegro non Troppo*.

25th October:

A Sight of Shorts

Porklips Now (1980)

A parody of *Apocalypse Now* from the maker of *Hardware Wars*.

Felix In Fairyland (1920)

One of the earliest Felix the Cat films.

Muppet Breakthrough

The workings of the modern corporate world suddenly become clear when you realise that their training films were made by the Muppets.

Plus the short-ish feature:

Nothing Sacred (1938)

Directed by William A. Wellman.

Starring Carole Lombard & Fredric March.

A woman with a rare terminal illness is turned into a national celebrity by an ambitious journalist. Acclaimed as the funniest and most biting exposure of the American media machine.