

Reel Buzz

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PALACE NOVA

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hi there! from your new President.

Welcome to our new members and thank you to all our regulars for sticking with us. So far my life has been stress free with only a couple of executive decisions required, which is mainly thanks to Guy Olding who seems to know what to do and when to do it, before a problem even happens!

The worst part is trying to write this column for *Reelbuzz* – no-one let me read the small print in the job description. I spent too much time reading the bit about watching free movies whilst I was hand-fed peeled grapes.

In this issue of *Reelbuzz* you will find the Term II film programme and I expect to see you all there every Thursday at 7.00 pm. Actually I'll be in Europe for six weeks but my spies will let me know who is not a true AUFS member and only joined for the free movie pass in 'O' week. Remember we have a door prize so if you come to a Thursday night film you could win another movie pass. If the films for this term don't suit you, don't complain, come to the next film choosing night and tell us what you want to see.

I suppose I should say a little something about the films and videos that I've seen, as this is a film society after all. I was impressed with the Cohen brothers *The Man Who Wasn't There*. I didn't think it was slow, just leisurely, a little bit like Adelaide! Maybe I just have a fetish about old-fashioned barber-shops. The smell of the hair oil!

I also went to the media preview (presidential perk!) of *Baise-moi*, which is reviewed in this issue. If you are expecting titillation, don't bother to go. It's more *Thelma and Louise* meets *Pulp Fiction* with a bit of explicit sex thrown in. But go; if only to annoy those who haven't seen it, yet would have it banned.

As far as DVDs go I watched *Final Fantasy* but I'm afraid I can't get excited about the fate of computer-generated images. Who cares if they get the life

sucked out of them and turned into ghosts. As for the heroine – I don't care how many thousand individual strands of hair they gave her. They all did exactly the same thing, just like a Sunsilk advertisement.

During the semester break we had a video day in the Union Cinema and showed *Sunset Boulevard* and *Double Indemnity*, two excellent Billy Wilder films. Six of us turned up. To all those who didn't check their email, or did and couldn't be bothered coming – you missed out on 4 hours of classic film noir.

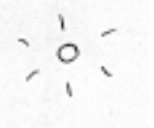
Mention must also be made of the forthcoming weekend away in July. We are giving you plenty of time to pencil it in and reorganise your lives. What could be better during a wet, cold winter weekend than sitting in a beach house in Goolwa planning a new world order. We also spend a disproportionate amount of time watching videos, eating, drinking and crashing out on the nearest bit of floor, not necessarily in that order. So get a big thick texta and write AUFS WEEKEND AWAY under July 12-14.

I think I've waffled enough. Remember – come to the Union Cinema, Thursdays 7.00pm. Bring your friends, get them to join AUFS too.

His Omnipotence

WEEKEND AWAY

Stroll along the beach, watch films all night and stuff yourself with Mark's wonderful culinary creations - what more do you want out of life? 12-14th July we'll be heading down to Goolwa. Cost will be \$8 per person /night. Details on location, how to get there, what to bring etc will be advised. It would be useful to know as soon as possible those who are interested in coming and it would be great to see some new faces...



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REVIEWS

WAKING LIFE

Directed by Richard Linklater.

With animated images painted over live-action film *Waking Life* follows an anonymous young man's encounters with a series of people who discourse on the nature of human existence and its relationship to dream experiences. As he realises that these discussions reflect the world around him it appears that the medium is the message: the dream is inescapable.

Animation buffs may be interested in the visual technique but it is not sufficiently well utilised to be anything more than a gimmick. There are no substantial characters, no plot and no themes worth more than



a few minutes of brain-power. The philosophical monologues are not developed systematically enough to be intellectually interesting.

In fact, it's tiresome soap-box-like rhetoric, saturated in ego, laden with smug and pointless quotes and name-dropping.

Any glimmerings of insight are undermined by its ironic self-commentary, as though Linklater wants any sceptics to think that he actually does know what he's doing and that there really is an 'inner meaning'. I would put up with it as a 5 minute short lost in the depths of *Eat Carpet* but as a feature film it's an hour and a half too long. I give Linklater one tick for trying something different but minus a lot for inflicting this banal pretentiousness on the world.

Currently screening at Palace-Nova Eastend Cinemas.

Guy

WE WERE SOLDIERS

Directed by Randall Wallace.

"We knew what Vietnam had been like. ... Hollywood got it wrong every damned time, whetting politically twisted knives on the bones of our dead brothers." - Lieutenant-General Harold G. Moore (retired)

As you can see, General Moore has a bit of a chip on his shoulder about the film industry. In his view,



Apocalypse Now, *Platoon*, *Full Metal Jacket* etc. all lied about the Vietnam war, particularly by denigrating the US military as a disintegrating mob of incompetent, brutal officers and unwilling, stoned draftees.

To remedy this, Moore wrote an account of the first major battle between American and North Vietnamese forces, in which he himself had led a battalion of US Cavalry. His men were not riding horses, of course - the 7th Cavalry "had cashed in its horses for choppers, and gone tear-assing around 'Nam, looking for the shit".

They found it at the Ia Drang Valley in 1965, where around 400 of Moore's men were surrounded and attacked by 2000 enemy. What ensued was very bloody for all concerned (and, no, I won't spoil the movie by revealing what happened). Moore got out alive (obviously), and years later his book became a best-seller and was the inspiration for *We Were Soldiers*.

It might have been a good basis for a film, but writer/director Randall Wallace made a hash of it. The first hour or so - set on base as the unit prepares for war - is just plain awful. Moore is played by Mel Gibson, as well, Mel Gibson. You know, the all-round nice guy



who's smart, well-read, loves his family, cares for his soldiers, goes to church, is tough and yet good-humoured.

If Moore was really like this, the US Army should have got in touch with the Vatican to have him canonised.

Moreover, military training is portrayed as a rather jolly lark - like an exciting boys' adventure camp. It's worlds away from the brutality depicted in Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* and last year's *Tigerland*. *We Were Soldiers* plays more like a US Army recruiting commercial than a serious exploration of military training.

However, things get vicious once the unit is deployed to Vietnam. The battle sequences are well directed and visualised. One particularly intense scene depicts a true incident when a US airforce jet overshoot its target and dropped napalm on the US position. The images of people ablaze and burn injuries are some of the most unpleasant film scenes I've ever seen. This, presumably, is what gives the film its 'MA' rating. (Of course, if it had shown any full-frontal nudity or sex it would have received an 'R' classification, as these are obviously much more disturbing than seeing people fry!)

There is some attempt to depict the enemy point of view, with little vignettes featuring the North Vietnamese commander and one of his soldiers. However, the real focus is Mel, the all-American wonderboy.

Overall, I can only give this a C+. Don't see it if you're disturbed by realistic violence or find Mel Gibson irritating.

Paul

INTIMITE (Intimacy)

Directed by Patrice Chéreau.

Claire (Kerry Fox) comes to Jay's (Mark Rylance) apartment every Wednesday for wild but uninvolved sex. She leaves immediately afterwards; they barely speak. While repeatedly denying that he is really interested, Jay becomes increasingly obsessed with her. He follows her to an amateur theatre where he meets her bluff taxi-driver husband Andy (Timothy Spall). Every step of Jay's involvement increases his turmoil and potential for self-destruction that threatens to destroy Claire and Andy as well.

The film is based on short stories by Hanif Kureishi, also responsible for *My Beautiful Laundrette* and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*. It joins a number of recent French films, including *Romance* (which wasn't) and *L'Ennui* (which was) - *l'ennui* means 'the boredom' - as tales of dehumanisation, boredom and passivity. The characters exist in social vacuums, lacking the psychological and emotional tools for meaningful existence.

Psychological incapacity becomes social fact, and the only form of engagement with the rest of the world



that they can think of is to wallow in the hedonistic nihilism of super-explicit sex. There's a lot of this and it's rather off-putting and tiresome. American Psycho showed that there's more to meaninglessness: Patrick Bateman skipped a lot and talked about music (what about film?). However, though *Intimacy's* depressing, harrowing and occasionally tedious and pretentious, it isn't actually a bad film. The characters' torment is not implausible and their fate does become involving. There are also unexpected touches of quiet humour that relieve the bleakness of it.

Currently screening at Palace-Nova Eastend Cinemas.

Gug

BAlSE-MOI (Fuck Me)

Directed by Virgine Despentes and Coralie Trinh Thi. *Baise-moi* is an intense and disturbing film. It is a road-trip of two women who have simply had enough of being victims of abuse and take charge of their own lives. Manu (Raffaella Anderson) is gang raped and sets out on a killing spree on which she encounters Nadine (Karen Bach). They kill and fuck; that is basically the plot. The moral is much harder to establish; what is this film actually trying to say about women - as violent killers and as sexual beings?

There has been an outcry around the world about the film's depiction of actual sex, both in the rape scene and later when the women choose to have sex. Its R-rating is now being reviewed as conservatives (who have not seen the film) want it banned. *Baise-moi*, far from a great film, has the potential of becoming a cult classic and everyone should be allowed to make up their own minds about it.



PROGRAMME TERM II

All films will be screened at 7pm on Thursdays in the Union Cinema, level 5 of the Union Building. All films are free for members; membership is available at the door for \$5. Door prizes (free movie passes! *Ed. note*) will be drawn at all films.

Week 8: 9th May

CANE TOADS: AN UNNATURAL HISTORY

1988. Dir: Mark Lewis.

Hilarious Australian documentary about a biological control that went wrong. Meet toad lovers, toad haters ("Me last panel-van was better, it had wider tyres"), and toad drug abusers.

Plus...

THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME

1932. Dir: Irving Pichel & Ernest B. Schoedsack. Starring Joel McCrea & Fay Wray.

Evil Count Zaroff lurks in his remote island hideaway, wrecking passing ships and hunting down the survivors for sport. From the team that made *King Kong*.

Week 9: 6th May

GOD TOLD ME TO

1976. Dir: Larry Cohen.

A series of apparently motiveless murders have one perplexing feature in common: the killers all claim that "God told me to". A bizarre re-interpretation of the Second Coming prophesy combining SF, mystery, horror and crime-thriller genres.

Plus...

THE DANGLING PARTICIPLE

A satirical pastiche of pre-1960s sex education films.

Week 10: 23rd May

PULP FICTION

1994. Dir: Quentin Tarantino. (Rated-R)

What do they call a Big Mac in France? If you don't know then there's a serious gap in your cultural knowledge and you've missed one of John Travolta's two credible performances. Quintessential Hollywood-on-Hollywood. Also starring Samuel L. Jackson, Uma Thurman, Ving Rhames, Bruce Willis, Harvey Keitel and everyone else.

Plus...

LAMBERT THE SHEEPISH LION

What could be more appropriate to introduce this feature than some classic Disney?

Week 11: 30th May

Joint screening with Women in Film and Television (SA). Free admission for all-comers!

GETTING THE DIRT ON TRISH

The director, Sue Brown, a local film-maker and winner of the Melbourne Film Festival prize, will be present for Q&A.

Plus short film:

TBA

Week 12: 6th June

THE NAVIGATOR: A MEDIAEVAL ODYSSEY

1988. Dir: Vincent Ward.

A mediaeval peasant-boy has a vision that promises to protect his village from the Black Death. They dig through the earth to emerge in modern-day Auckland. A sad but moving film exploring the themes of faith and fatalism.

Plus...

AUTOBATHN

An abstract animated film representing a car journey, accompanied by Kraftwerk's famous music.

Week 13: 13th June

WAGES OF FEAR (*Le salaire de la peur*)

1953. Dir: Henri-Georges Clouzot. Starring Yves Montand & Charles Vanel.

An exploitative mining company pays a group of truck drivers to transport a consignment of nitroglycerine across some of the most dangerous mountains on earth. An influential film from Clouzot, master of suspense. Based on the novel by Georges Arnaud.

Plus...

LUNA, LUNA, LUNA

Disturbing light effects with acetate etching.

