

# Reel Buzz

Monthly Publication of the Adelaide University Film Society

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PALACE NOVA

## *President's Report*

### *The end and yet just the beginning.*

It has been such a long time since the last President's Report. Exams have been sat and essays handed in, tears (of relief I hope) shed over the results, Santa has been to visit (if you were good) and the New Year hangover is a dim memory and a few missing brain cells. Personally, I have taken time off from world domination (leaving that to another 'president' and his boy blunder) and camped in the Grampians and The Coorong watching for alien invaders, shooting stars and space shuttle debris. But all too soon it is time to stand in front of the camera again for a University mugshot as the Adelaide University Film Society prepares to embark on yet another year's programme.

There were times last year when many of us thought that the Society would cease to function due to the general apathy of its members. But thanks to a chosen few who took the time not only to attend the film screenings but also to prepare and distribute posters and fact sheets, book and collect films and most importantly project the films, the society survived. Mention should be made of Guy Olding, who has finally cast off the shackles of the film society and was last seen wandering aimlessly and lost in Canberra. Guy, if you ever manage to find a road leading out of there I'm sure we can find a few film society jobs for you to do here!

To all those who have just joined, are thinking of joining or are long-standing members, remember this is your club so without your support it cannot function. Come to as many films as possible whether it is to help out with projecting or just to fall asleep in the dark. This term we have six weeks of film screenings – see the programme elsewhere in Reelbuzz. Make an effort and join us at least once, who knows you may even like it!

President Notdubya

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## *24 Hour Party People*

Directed by Michael Winterbottom.

Starring Steve Coogan.

In 1976 an almost unknown group called the Sex Pistols were the opening act for Manchester group the Buzzcocks. Only 35 people were there to watch. Every one of them was profoundly changed. Or so the legend goes.

One of the people watching was a Manchester television presenter named Tony Wilson. Wilson had his finger on the pulse of Manchester's underground music scene and struck a bargain with some of his musician friends. He'd start a record company, there would be no contracts, they would all share in the profits, and they would all be able to "fuck off" if they ever felt like it. And with that, Factory Records was born. Factory Records was arguably the most influential record company of the early 80s new wave scene, notably because they signed bands like Joy Division/New Order and Buzzcocks.

*24 Hour Party People* chronicles the music and the characters influential to the big music movements in Manchester through the career of Tony Wilson. Wilson is an idealist, he takes himself too seriously, and always seems to be just a bit ahead of his time. Involved not only in promoting Punk in the late 70s, New Wave in the 80s, but also Acid House music and raves in the early 90s.

People who love any of this music will be enthralled by this film. You get an inside view of incidents like the death of Ian Curtis, lead singer of Joy Division, the crack cocaine addiction and wild antics of Shaun Ryder (lead singer of the Happy Mondays), to the birth of raves and the ecstasy culture.

People who don't love this music, or who have never heard it, will be touched by Michael Winterbottom's wonderful storytelling style. You cannot watch one of his films and remain unmoved. Tony Wilson's story is interesting and endearing and best of all, (mostly) true.

ESther

# Film Reviews

## *Punch Drunk Love*

Directed by Paul Thomas Anderson.  
Starring Adam Sandler and Emily Watson.

I'm one of those secret silly-movie rental fanatics on recovery days ('days after' big parties or exhausting weeks) so I know a bit about Adam Sandler. I've seen *Happy Gilmore* and *Big Daddy* and, really, all of his silly-movie undertakings. His acting never wavers: he's



comical in a shy little-boy, wouldn't-you-just-love-him-to-love-you-if-he'd only-grow-up sort of way (because his movies inevitably have a happy ever after love story conclusion and, yes, he usually grows up). Now, after seeing *Punch-Drunk Love*, I'm asking the million dollar question: is Adam Sandler following in the footsteps of such comedians as Robin Williams, Tom Hanks and Jim Carrey and proving to be a diversified actor, capable, even excelling in serious dramatic roles? Not to confuse the plot—*Punch-Drunk Love* is a comedy and a love story, but it is a far cry from the typical Adam Sandler silly-movie.

Strange things happen to Barry Egan, Sandler's character and these are things he cannot really understand. Nor can we. And these are things he's not sure if he needs to understand. Nor are we. The movie bumbles along in such an almost disjointed way that I really didn't know what to think. Do I like it? Is it moving too slowly? Is it beyond my philosophical appreciation? Nevertheless, I was intrigued. Sandler's character is darkly hilarious, pitiful, uneasy and dangerous. It is painful to watch him with a roomful of loud and insensitive sisters, slowly losing his mind. Just as painful as it is to watch him carry on a conversation with Lena Leonard played by Emily

Watson. And just when the pain makes you ask *do I like it? is it moving too slowly? is it beyond my philosophical appreciation?*, something happens and you're laughing out loud. Sandler is brilliantly and entertainingly disturbing. I may not have known what I was thinking throughout the course of this not-what-it-seems film but I couldn't take the smile off my face for at least ten minutes after it ended.

The film is directed by Paul Thomas Anderson, who also did *Boogie Nights* and *Magnolia*, the former being a wild romp of a movie aptly set to a cocaine, porn-fantasy script with a funky soundtrack, the latter being a melodramatic segmented feeling, more than anything, with a melancholy soundtrack. With *Punch-Drunk Love*, Anderson has widened his repertoire to include a quirky dark comedy with a delightfully eccentric soundtrack. All three movies, in their own unique way, have the ability to remind you, days afterward, that film is cathartic. Likewise, all have a superb cast with a few unforgettable roles (Julianne Moore in *Boogie Nights* and nearly everyone in *Magnolia*, Phillip Seymour Hoffman—appearing in each of Anderson movies—included). And, they all have the sort of soundtrack you wouldn't mind adding to your CD collection. Go see this one. It's a good break from the everyday.

*Punch-Drunk Love* will be screening at Palace Nova Eastend Cinemas from April 3rd.

**Heather Taylor Johnson**

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## *Talk to Her (Hable Con Ella)*

Directed by Pedro Almodovar.  
Starring Javier Camara, Leonor Watling and Rosario



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Flores.

Winner of the Golden Globe for Best Foreign Film 2003, *Talk to Her* is another thought provoking film from Oscar winning director Pedro Almodovar. *All About My Mother*, Almodovar's last film, ended with a theatre curtain opening to reveal a darkened stage. *Talk to Her* begins with the same curtain also opening.

Two men, Benigno and Marco sit next to each other in a theatre by chance. Months later, they meet at a private clinic where Benigno works as a sole carer to Alicia, a young ballet student in a coma. Marco's girlfriend, Lydia, a bullfighter, has been gored and is



also in a coma. A friendship develops between the two men as they care for and share a devotion to women who cannot return their affection.

Famous for dark vibrant comedies and domestic or sex dramas, this film heralds a major change of direction for Almodovar. The story line is simple yet complex as the film skillfully contrasts the frozen time within the walls of the clinic and the past, present and future lives of the four characters. The actors are outstanding, illuminating four different views of loneliness. But Javier Camara's (Benigno) performance as a deeply tragic but yet even heroic figure anchors the film.

The stand out highlight must be the Bunuelesque *Shrinking Lover*, a 7 minute silent film within the film. This elegant pastiche is exquisitely Almodovarian – funny, tender and slightly shocking and an amazing commentary on *Talk to Her* itself.

There are many very worthwhile films vying for your movie dollars at the moment – I would put this one very near the top of the list.

*Talk to Her* will be screeing at Palace Nova Eastend Cinemas from March 6th.

**Notdubya**

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## *The Rules of Attraction*

Written and Directed by Roger Avary.  
Starring James Van Der Beek and Shannyn Sossamon.

Welcome to the world of the American college student — drinking, partying, fucking, and... well that's about it really: drinking, partying, fucking. Do these people ever study?

The story revolves around the lives of several characters, all told in flashback. The central character is Sean Bateman, played by James van der Beek (you know, the guy from *Dawson's Creek*?). Around him flow several characters: a girl saving her virginity for her boyfriend's return from Europe; her party-animal roommate; the gay guy attracted to guys who aren't, and the mystery author of a series of love letters to Sean.

In contrast to the students, we have the mothers, played by screen veterans Swoozie Kurtz and Faye Dunaway, whose lives are even more empty than their kids', and who swap nameless pills to get through their days. Their kids have grown, their husbands are at work and the only thing they have left to do is pick the colour of their next car. At least the students have something to look forward to if they can manage to keep three brain cells intact through the haze of drugs and booze and actually pass some exams.

*The Rules of Attraction* is the screen adaptation of the Bret Easton Ellis novel. Director Roger Avery adds some nice touches, like running the film backward before each character's story, to put it in context, as most of the action happen simultaneously with the other characters' stories. Less impressive is the gun toting monologue addressed to the camera, its too been-there Tarantino-esque.

Throughout the film, all the characters remain equally shallow, although Sean Bateman ultimately shows himself as possibly the only true romantic in the film, as he falls in love with the mind of the author of the notes even though he has no idea who the person is.

Finally, bubbling away in the (very) background are issues of free will and determinism; can the people change their lives, make different decisions, or is it all just a case of "I knew it was going to happen"

When it comes down to it, I enjoyed watching it. 3-1/4 stars.

*The Rules of Attraction* is currently screening at Palace Nova Eastend Cinemas.

**Peter-only-my-3rd-review-Am-I-loosening-up?-Cassidy**

## Another review

### *The Hours*

Directed by Stephen Daldry.  
Starring Meryl Streep, Julianne Moore, Nicole Kidman, Ed Harris and Toni Collette.

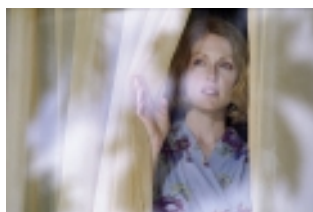
Don't you just hate when people start talking about 'the best film of the year', often just before the Academy Awards. It seems like such an easy way out. How can you compare a film like *The Hours* with a film like *Chicago*? Even though *Chicago* is an enjoyable film it is no more than a piece of fluff, with a bit of song and dance thrown in, next to Stephen Daldry's masterly *The Hours*. But I don't need to call it the best film of the year, the film speaks very well for itself.

Virginia Woolf is plagued by mental illness but begins, this particular day, to write her first great novel *Mrs Dalloway*. Housewife Laura Brown stays in bed reading the novel two decades later



and is so moved that she makes the decision to change her own life forever. In contemporary New York Clarissa Vaughan, a modern Mrs Dalloway, prepares a party for a close friend who has just won a major poetry prize but is dying of AIDS. The lives of these three women are seamlessly interwoven by intricate details such as the moments of love that they cannot grasp.

When I read Michael Cunningham's novel of the same name I was completely stunned by the beauty of the writing and the complexity of the idea. The women are portrayed from within with such a light touch even though the sadness of life threatens to overwhelm them all. Cunningham's knowledge of Woolf's style and ideas showed in many little ways. When I heard that a film was being made I wondered how they would manage to handle the understatement and the interior monologues. Now, all I can say is that Daldry, who also directed *Billy Elliot*, has put all my fears to rest. On screen, *The*



*Hours* works just as wonderfully as it does as a novel, thanks to its brilliant cast, fantastic music by Phillip Glass and a near enough perfect screen play.

Nicole Kidman is unrecognisable as the plain and haunted, chain smoking Virginia Woolf, Julianne Moore plays homely Laura Brown with compassionate understatement and Meryl Streep does one of the best interpretations of her career as the ever positive but slowly cracking Clarissa Vaughan. The performances of the entire cast are exquisite. Ed Harris' intensity as the dying poet is almost painful and Toni Collette is eerily cheerful as the typical fifties girl next door.



If you are interested in films exploring life without sentimentality, *The Hours* is one not to be missed. It is a very sad film in many ways as it deals with difficult issues such as depression and loss but ultimately it is a profoundly optimistic one about enjoying the moment that is now, for it will never return.

*The Hours* is currently screening at Palace Nova Eastend Cinemas.



#### Editor's Note:

Some of the reviews in this edition have been edited. To read the entire reviews and find info about our weekly screenings please visit our website [www.aufs.com](http://www.aufs.com)

*Editor: Anna Solding  
Contributors: Allan Taylor,  
Esther Speight, Peter Cassidy  
and Heather Taylor Johnson*

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