

Ree / Buzz

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PALACE NOVA

Prez Report

Dear Film Soc Members,

As our president has decided to step back for a while, the honour of writing this report falls on me, the Vice President. Since I have been away for the last three months I have absolutely no idea what has been going on in the club. Instead I thought I could tell you a bit about my wonderful holiday (read: research trip) which took me to Niagara Falls, let me enjoy a traditional Norwegian wedding and spend many a lazy day at the beach in Sweden. Or maybe I'll leave that for some other time.

The truth is that there are a few things I should tell you about the club: Firstly, we need more active members. Urgently! As it is, we are barely managing to show the film every week. So if you like our films and think we should continue showing them please come to committee meetings on Mondays, 1-2 pm in the W.P. Rogers Room, level 4 of the Union Building or let us know that you might be able to help in any other way. We need people to do front-of-house, pick up the films, write reviews, plaster the uni with posters and other little things. All help is very welcome!

Secondly, there is another film choosing night coming up very soon (check details below or on our website). If you want to have a say in what we show, this is your night. Just come along with fresh ideas and a willingness to vote. Looking forward to seeing you all there!

Anna (& wild baby Twig)

**Come along to the next AUFS
film choosing night on Saturday,
13th of September.
Pick which films we'll be showing in
the last term of the year.
Email filmchoosinghost@aufs.org for
further info as well as location.**

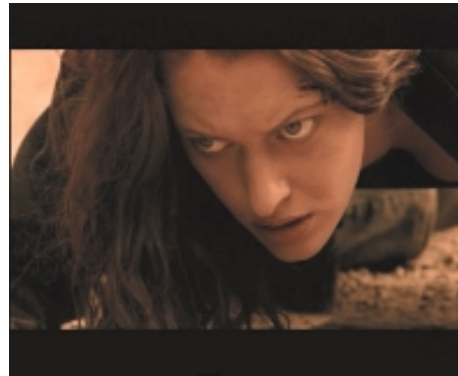
<http://www.aufs.org>

Undead

Directed by Michael and Peter Spierig

Starring Felicity Mason, Dirk Hunter

Undead is the latest zombie movie to hit our screens. In fact, the only reason it is probably hitting our screens is because it's an Australian-made effort; otherwise it would be straight to video with a lot of other good B-



grade films. And, believe me, *Undead* is definitely a B-grade film, but it's well worth a look. It is fun, funny, has a great deal of tension, and it's got

zombies in it. I can't think of anything better for a late-night movie.

Our story begins in sleepy, "peaceful, rustic Berkeley", a fishing town somewhere in the outback. We quickly meet our main characters. There's Rene (Felicity Mason) who has just lost the family farm after the death of her parents. There's Wayne, the local pilot for hire, and soon to be father with his beauty-queen girlfriend. And finally, there's Harrison (Dirk Hunter), a strange loner (there's always one!) who claims to have been abducted by aliens. On the way out of town, the car Rene is travelling in has to stop behind an accident. Meanwhile, meteorites start falling to earth and puncturing people. But these people don't die; they get up and start attacking those around them, gruesomely eating their flesh. Well, that's where the fun begins.

The film includes a section which is quite obviously an homage to *Night of the Living Dead* (either version). The Spierigs are obviously fans and anyone who knows that film will get a chuckle from the basement that seems to go on forever. But don't worry, the film does not sink into a pale imitation of *Night*. The zombie idea is taken further, a possible explanation for the occurrence is given, and there is a great, if slightly

Film Reviews

predictable ending (for some reason it reminded me of *Day of the Triffids*, but that might just be my imagination working overtime).

One of the few irritating features of this film is one shared by so many others in this genre. It has pretty standard zombies, and any good zombie freak knows that to kill one you have to destroy its brain (shoot it in the head etc). God, if I'd been stuck in "peaceful, rustic Berkeley" those zombies would have been cleared out in one pleasant afternoon of bullets and blood! Oh well, a film reviewer can dream, can't she? And, last of all, my favourite line was spoken by Harrison, he says, "You've gotta ask yourself, are you a fighter fish-queen, or are you zombie food?"

The ReelBuzz: Great B-movie fun.

ESther

Cypher

Written up as "If the *Matrix Reloaded* left you wanting a seriously clever mind-meld, then *Cypher* is the film you've been waiting for... one of this year's smartest thrillers." **** -Michael Adams, *empire magazine*

And I would have to agree in part to Michael Adams. First off, I think it helps to know that *Cypher* was



directed by Vincenzo Natali, known for his work on *Cube* (1997). This movie has many nuances from his previous movie

and at times, unfortunately, many scenes where one can see the exact correlation to the previous movie. But don't let this dishearten you; though it reuses Natali's old style, it is more than made up with a new flair. Most noticeable to me when I watched it was the similarities that it has to *Gattaca* (1997), not only in theme, namely hiding ones own identity and living another, but also in camera work, lighting, background scenery and scene manipulation.

The synopsis is that Morgan Sullivan (Jeremy Northam) is a man unhappy with his current life and seeks fulfilment elsewhere; in this case, as a spy for the multinational corporation Digicorp. His missions entail transmitting information from various conventions back to Ed Finster (Nigel Bennett). During one such convention he encounters a beautiful woman, Rita (Lucy Liu), who informs him of Digicorp's

brainwashing method. Morgan is then employed by Sunways, a rival corporation, as a double agent. From there it becomes a fight for Morgan to remember who he actually is, while at the same time trying to stay alive. Morgan gets one last assignment, where he must steal a data file from a secure network and give it to a new player, Rooks. This ends with dramatic consequences for his state of well being.

I thought that Morgan Sullivan was well played by Jeremy Northam (*The Net*, *Amistad* and others), who brought depth and mystery to



the character as well as a certain amount of psychosis. Northam does well to skip from one character to another and not get them totally mixed up. As the viewer, it was confusing as to who he was supposed to be at times, but gratifying to know that he was having just as hard a time.

Rita was played by Lucy Liu (*Ally McBeal*, *Charlies Angels*, *Charlies Angels: Full Throttle* and many others) and as much as I would love to give her a great review, I must admit that Lucy Liu was not much more than a supporting character and acted as thus. Even so, I believe that she could have played the character a little differently to what I usually see her playing: in other words, Lucy Liu.

Supporting cast members were Ed Finster (Nigel Bennett), head of Digicorp and Frank Calloway (Timothy Webber) head of Sunways. Both played their parts well, namely that of two rival corporate heads that will do anything to get what they want.

If you enjoyed *Gattaca* and the *Cube* then this movie is for you; if you didn't, then I suggest that you give it a try: you may find more in it than you think. Definitely keeps you guessing till the end about identities and alignments.

Alexander

Editor: Felix Staica

Contributors: Anna, ESther, Alexander, Brenton Priestly, Odin

Film Reviews

Hot-Headed Cops and Cold Warriors

Narc

Directed by Joe Carnahan

Starring Jason Patric, Ray Liotta

Buffalo Soldiers

Directed by Gregor Jordan

Starring Joaquin Phoenix, Ed Harris

Narc and *Buffalo Soldiers*, both now playing at the Palace, are throwbacks to the films of the '70s. *Narc* deliberately recalls *Serpico* (1973) and *The French Connection* (1971) with its gritty tale of crooked cops, and *Buffalo Soldiers* harkens back to other military satires *Catch-22* and *M*A*S*H* (both 1970).

While it offers a couple of surprises, *Narc* intentionally follows the formula established by those tough, intense cop movies of the '70s every inch of the way. William Friedkin, who directed *The French Connection*, was an early and vocal proponent of *Narc*, and it's easy to see what appealed to him: the conflicted, brooding hero, the grimy, handheld camerawork, the almost existentialist sense of moral ambiguity.

The film certainly packs a punch—it's extremely violent (and rated R) but also extremely honest about its brutality—there are no cheap thrills in the bloodshed: early on, a pregnant woman gets shot. An almost unrecognisable Jason Patric (miles away from *Speed 2: Cruise Control*) plays the lead, an undercover narcotics agent who has just recovered from heroin addiction. It's a good role, and he plays it well, but it's Ray Liotta, as loose-cannon cop Henry Oak, who really electrifies the screen.



Liotta, like Pacino, or Robert De Niro, or Michael Caine or Jack Nicholson, doesn't seem to differ much from role to role, but is nonetheless a compulsively

watchable screen presence (he's also terrific in *Identity*, which is also playing at the moment).

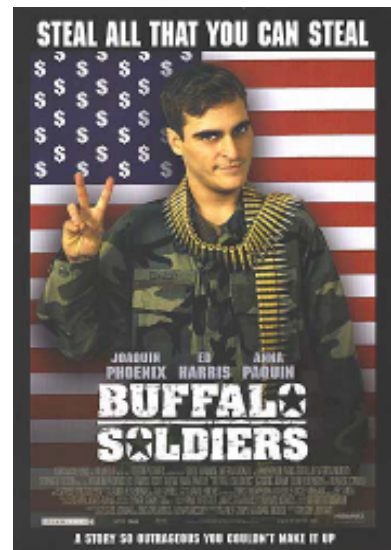
Big-time fame seems to have eluded him (there's something sinister in his face that perhaps denies him leading-man status) since his early roles in *Something Wild* (1986) and *Goodfellas* (1990), but his riveting performance in *Narc* confirms that he's at the top of his form. If you enjoy cop movies at all, *Narc* fulfils its promise all the way as it barrels on down towards

its almost claustrophobically intense conclusion.

Narc is director Joe Carnahan's second film—his first, *Blood, Guts, Bullets and Octane* (1998) was apparently made for \$7,000. I haven't seen it, but *Narc* is a move in the right direction. *Buffalo Soldiers* is also Gregor Jordan's second film, and a particular disappointment after his first, the very funny Aussie comedy *Two Hands* (1999).

Buffalo Soldiers' release was actually pre-empted by Jordan's third film, *Ned Kelly* (2003)—it was postponed once, after September 11, and again, when the Iraq war began, due to its anti-military sentiments. I wish I could say that its miserable failure at US box office has been due to the anti-military theme, but unfortunately, the film just isn't very entertaining.

The first half-hour or so is quite interesting—the film is set in on a US Army base in Germany in 1989, which makes for an original milieu (my father served on a US Army base in Heidelberg during the early '70s, which added some personal resonance). Its anti-hero, an enlisted man, played by



Joaquin Phoenix, is a profiteer with has no compunction about selling drugs or stolen weapons. Phoenix is good, Ed Harris, who plays a milquetoast colonel, gets a few laughs, as does leathery old Scott Glenn.

But the film has an uneasy tone, and never really seems to hit its stride. It's hard to know where such a promising cast and material and what must have been a fairly expensive production fail. There are some nice touches, like the punk German couple whose Volkswagon gets crushed by a tank, but when the climax comes—a contrived and wrong-headed action scene with drugged-out US soldiers battling each other to the death—the film had lost me.

Brenton Priestley

Review & Programme Term III

The Rage in Placid Lake

Directed by Tony McNamara

Starring Ben Lee, Rose Byrne

The name of this film is unfortunate, as I imagined it to be a sequel to, or at least in the vein of *Lake Placid*, but it certainly is not. *The Rage in Placid Lake* is a funny and engaging Australian movie centred around the life of Placid Lake (Ben Lee), progeny of insuperable hippy parents (Garry MacDonald and Miranda Richardson), who taught him to be eternally calm and accepting, and to see the good in every situation.

Placid was then thrust into a typical Australian schoolyard wearing a frilly white dress to 'challenge their (ordinary folk's) ideas of gender specification'. The tension between the expectations of his parents, and the realities of life lead to a crisis, where Placid decided to give up the good fight and go with the flow, for is their a point being who you are if that person is despised by society? A plan for happiness is embraced and a future in insurance, and corporate climbing begins.

The film shows the nature of rebellion aptly, and applies it to the rejection of unreasonable expectations rather than a limiting future, which is the treatment usually given to such subject matter. At the same time, it is not exactly a new idea; it is basically a protracted expression of the Monty Python skit of the poet's son leaving to become a miner. Still, it shows vice in all its incantations, but is light enough not to get bogged down in it, and in the spirit of a coming of age film the conclusion is satisfactory.

The film deals succinctly with a number of themes, and uses an interesting method of working exclusively with caricatures to avoid singularising the message. It is a witty social commentary comedy of a high calibre and was voted most popular film at the 2003 Melbourne International Film Festival. Co-starring Rose Byrne, it is perhaps the best Australian film since *Two Hands*.

Odin

Join the Adelaide Uni Film Society. If you're a member, tell your friends. Membership is just \$5—a whole semester of free films!

Quiz

1. What movie was advertised using the following quote: "On every street in every city there's a nobody who dreams of being a somebody. He's a lonely forgotten man desperate to prove he's alive"?
2. What film does this quote come from: Suzanne Stone Maretto: "You aren't really anybody in America if you're not on TV." In 1995 two directors were watching the improvised scenes one of their main actors was doing to get into character for the film they were shooting. They thought it was so funny that they kept some actors and invited more onto the set after filming and shot a second feature film with the improvised session in 5 days.
3. What was the name of the first film?
4. What was the name of the second/5 day film?
5. What film featured the classical piece "O Fortuna" from the opera *Carmina Burana* by Carl Orff, but used the music so effectively that the piece of music is now commonly known (well, but people who don't know about classical music) by the name of the film rather than the original title?

Answers to last issue's quiz

1. *Man Bites Dog* (1992)
2. John Connor, *Terminator 3* (2003)
3. *Bad Taste* (1987)
4. *The Mummy Returns* (2001)
5. John Landis (*Blues Brothers*, *Trading Places* amongst others)
6. Alfred Hitchcock
7. False. Sandy in the original *Grease* is an all-American girl. The script was changed to accommodate Olivia Newton-John.
8. She died before the end of shooting of *Reloaded*, but had already filmed most of her scenes.
9. It was the number of days the filmmakers could afford to feed the cast and crew.
10. Scarlett O'Hara looks wistfully over Tara and says, "After all ... tomorrow is another day."

ESther

WEEK 7, Thursday 11th September

Patrick (1978)

Directed by Richard Franklin

Starring Susan Penhaligon

Horror. Franklin's fun homage to Hitchcock. From Australia (115 mins)

With Short:

Rescued by Rover (1904)

WEEK 8, Thursday 18th September

Cross of Iron (1977)

Directed by Sam Peckinpah

Starring James Coburn

A World War II tale told from the German perspective, following a platoon of German soldiers in the Russia of 1943. From the USA (118 mins)

With Short:

Little Toot (1952)

Don't forget to go to the AUFS website for fuller details and information:

www.aufs.org

All films screening at 7pm,

in the Union Cinema, level 5 Union Building.

Sweets and drinks available!

<http://www.aufs.org>