

Reel/Buzz

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PALACE NOVA

Editor's Rant

Felix took it upon him to take some time off in the mid year break and travel to a far, far distant land, and hence I'm taking his place for the time being.

After a somewhat jumbled and somewhat circular selection process, the films for Term 3 have finally been decided upon – note the dates and titles on the reverse of the newsletter. Hopefully there's a good mix of titles.

It's a rarity when we have two blockbuster Hollywood movies released in the same season that seem to satisfy both audiences and the critics: *Harry Potter 3* and *Spider-man 2*. Both bring depth to their respective universes where the previous films stuck mostly to the surface. The flash and dazzle is still there, but with it comes a refreshing complexity. Of course, I can hear the hard-core "arty" filmgoers groan when they see four stars next to a mainstream comic-book movie. I enjoy – and admire – Trauffaut and Kubrick as much as the next person, but there is a certain magic generated by Hollywood when it is at the top of its game. But of course for every *Spider-man 2* there are ten *Van Helsing's*, and the less mentioned about that bomb, the better.

Space is somewhat of a premium this time around thanks to Esther's Crossword, which was the source of much anguish. But there it is, and hopefully it will amuse you for a little while. If only it wasn't so darn big. Oh well. Happy filmgoing.

Josh

Dirty Pretty Things

Directed by Stephen Frears

Stephen Frears most commonly known from his previous efforts such as *Dangerous Liaisons*, *High Fidelity* and *The Grifters*, directs *Dirty Pretty Things* a disturbing yet fascinating new thriller. The film begins when Nigerian refugee, Okwe (Chiwetel Ejiofor) makes a startling discovery in one of the rooms in the Baltic Hotel where he works nights. He finds a human heart lodged in the toilet, which sparks his curiosity as he delves into the seedy and dark world encountering a

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sinister crime. He discovers an operation in which desperate individuals are selling their organs on the black market, lead by the delectably wicked Russian manager aptly named Sneaky. (Sergi Lopez) Senay, played by the adorable and talented Audrey Tautou, like Okwe is an illegal immigrant, and must work as a chamber-maid in the hotel to earn enough money to move to her dream city of New York. Steven Knight, the screenwriter of the film, manages to convey a very significant issue throughout the film, and this message concerns the unjust treatment of illegal immigrants. Senay and Okwe, whom are in constant fear of deportation, must go to great lengths to overcome moral dilemma's to survive.

Audrey Tautou is wonderful in her first English-speaking role, but is not the main star of the film despite the misleading movie poster with her as a main feature. Actor Chiwetel Ejiofor is the true highlight of this film and does a fantastic job of depicting a passionate illegal immigrant attempting to survive in the harsh world, where they go virtually unnoticed.

Overall *Dirty Pretty Things* is a truly excellent film, with likeable main characters that the audience establishes a bond with by the end of the movie. The acting is as brilliant as the screenplay and the audience is left satisfied with the deeply moving closure of the film.

Amanda

**** (out of five)

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban

Directed by Alfonso Cuarón

There's a point near the last act of the third Harry Potter film when the series finally goes beyond its literary roots and becomes a real "movie", one that works as cinema, and can stand alone as a good film in its own right. The first two instalments seemed little more than filmed versions of the books, though, to be fair, they were entertaining and colourful adventures. The replacement of director Chris Columbus with Alfonso Cuarón combined with the darker tone of the book results in a movie that is easily the best of the series so far.

This time Harry is wary of Sirius Black, an

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escapee from Azkaban, who seems to have been party to his parents' murder, and who now may be after Harry. Dementers, wraith-like creatures, are deployed around Hogwarts to ward Black away. Meanwhile, Harry takes lessons from the new Master of the Dark Arts Teacher, Professor Lupin, while Hagrid is promoted to professor, teaching flying lessons with Buckbeak, an oh-it's-not-Pegasus type creature. Of course, Hermione and Ron are there every step of the way.

All the extraneous scenes that made the previous films episodic have been trimmed, resulting in a much more focused story, even if sometimes the plotting is not as precise as it could be; for the uninformed, there is much that is left unexplained. Cuarón guides us through this world with a great visual sense, including a tongue-in-cheek moment when some snow appears to be splattered on the lens.

Where the three lead actors were timid in the previous outings, here they are strong and forthright. They're growing with their characters – Hermione, especially, seems to be taking charge more often than Harry. The main “cameo by a famous British actor” this time is Emma Thompson, playing the rather wacky Sybil Trelawney.

If “darker and more interesting” was the most used line to describe the *Chamber of Secrets*, then it is equally applicable to *Azkaban*. Combine that with Cuarón's skills, better characterisation and better performances from the leads and you have a movie that's even worth the time of non Harry Potter fans.

*** 1/2 (out of four)

Spider-man 2

Directed by Sam Raimi

Now *this* is how a superhero movie should be done. Forget *X-Men*, *Hulk* or yes, even the original *Superman*. What Sam Raimi has done here is cut directly to the central themes of the superhero genre and distilled them down to their basic elements.

At the end of the first film, Peter Parker (Toby Maguire) decided that he could not declare his love for Mary Jane Watson (Kirsten Dunst) at risk of endangering her life due to his “status” as Spider-man. The results of this quickly become apparent – now he is struggling through college, delivering pizzas in order to make ends meet. This apparent inability to mix his normal life and his superhero life

is the focus of the movie. It is of course exacerbated by his still unrequited love for Mary Jane, who is tired of Peter's unreliability when it comes to expressing his feelings for her, and is engaged to, of all people, an astronaut. Spider-man's foe this time is a physics professor, Otto Octavius (Alfred Molina), who, after a failed science experiment, becomes “Doc Ock” - a creature with four mechanical arms with minds of their own.

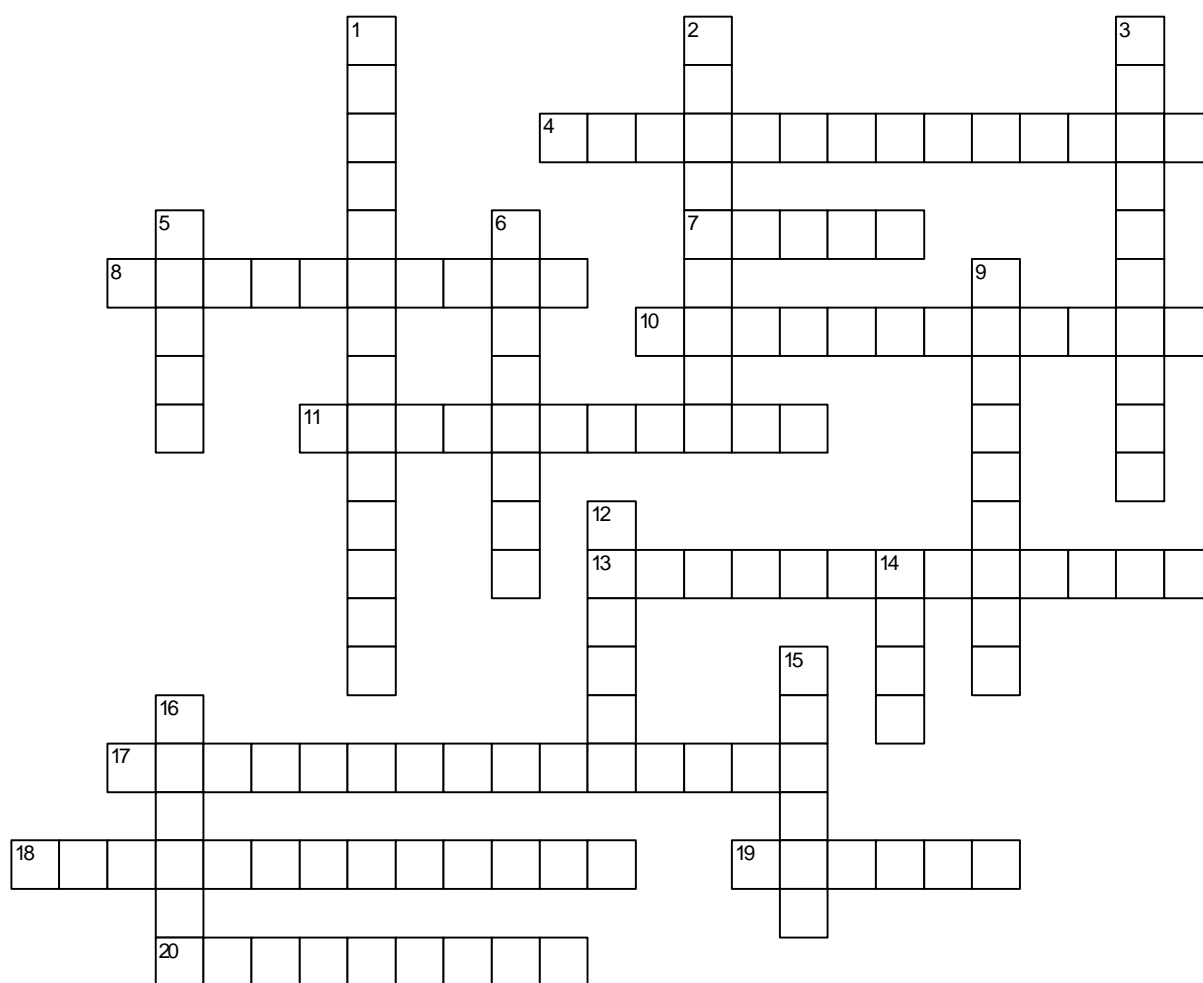


What really surprised me is that this is the first movie of this type where I thought the action scenes were an interruption to the drama. Usually, one snores through the dreary and undeveloped dialogue scenes that pass for character development in superhero movies, but not here. Here, thanks to the great screenplay by Alvin Sergent, we *care* about Peter and his predicament, and we care about the quite touching romance between the leads – we even care about Doc Ock, who is really only a victim of circumstance. And this, really, is where *Spider-man 2* is a cut above the rest. When the action does come, though, it's carried off with such technical brilliance we hardly stop to think that they are computer generated effects.

At its core *Spider-man 2* does abide by all of the conventions of the superhero/comic-book genre, and hence there is not much here that surprises us, but it is handled so deftly and confidently that it is a prime example of how and why this sort of story works. Maguire is brilliant in evoking the humanity of the character, and Dunst and Molina are only marginally less impressive. I'm not entirely sure how the ending sets itself up for the inevitable third film, but it is all for the betterment here – this just might be the best superhero movie there is.

**** (out of four)

Esther's Crossword



Esther

Across

4. What film featured a plastic bag fluttering in the wind?
7. Everyone's favourite green ogre.
8. Name gangsters refer to each other as, also name of a well known gangster film.
10. Name of the Aussie actress starring in the remake of The Stepford Wives.
11. Name of film based on the life of Pulan Devi?
13. The building where you will go for most AUFS film screenings
17. What is the title given to the person responsible for the "look" of a film?
18. Film set in the Edinburgh drug scene.
19. First name of martial arts star Chan.
20. Scariest street in 80s horror movies?

Down

1. Award winning Lynch film set in England
2. Film about a killer car.
3. Star of "Jezebel", "Now, Voyager" and "All About Eve"
5. Recent Cuba Gooding Jr. Film, Men of _ _ _ _ _
6. The final film about Agent Starling
9. Where would you be if you were told "If someone says "stop" or goes limp, taps out the fight is over".
12. The smelliest character in the Lion King films?
14. The film crew on a film that usually film minor shots are called the Second _ _ _ _ _
15. What animated film stars Rosie O'Donnell as a monkey?
16. John Waters ground breaking film Pink Flamingos featured which drag star?

Term III Program

All films are screened in the Union Cinema, Level 5, Union Building, at 7pm on Thursday evenings, unless otherwise stated. Membership for a year's worth of films is \$7. More detailed information can be found at www.aufs.org/programme

WEEK 1, Thursday 29th July

Chinatown

A private detective investigating an adultery case stumbles on to a scheme of murder that has something to do with water. A noir thriller that somehow transcends noir, Chinatown becomes a meditation on the bottomless well of human mystery. 16mm, Cinemascope /131min/ USA/1974/ Drama

With Short: **Dwaj Ludzie Z Szafa (Two Men and a Wardrobe)** (1958) (18 mins)

WEEK 2, Thursday 5th August

Rabbit Proof Fence

This is the true story of Molly Craig, a young black Australian girl who leads her younger sister and cousin in an escape from an official government camp, set up as part of an official government policy to train them as domestic workers and integrate them into white society. These three girls are part of what is referred to today as the 'Stolen Generation'. VHS/94 min/Australia/2002Drama

With Short: **What's a nice girl like you doing in a place like this?** (1963). Dir. Martin Scorsese. (9 mins)

WEEK 3, Thursday 12th August

The Day the Earth Stood Still

An alien (Klaatu) with his mighty robot (Gort) land their spacecraft on cold war Earth just after the end of World War II. They bring an important message for the planet. However, communication turns out to be difficult so, after learning something of the natives, Klaatu decides on an alternative approach. 16mm / 92min / USA / 1951 / B&W Science Fiction

With Short: **Le Voyage Dans la Lune (A Trip to the Moon)** (1902) (14 mins)

WEEK 4, Thursday 19th August

Mad Max

The original Australian classic. In an Australian dystopia of decaying order and violent highways, a police pursuit driver is drawn into a path of vengeance after a motorcycle gang targets him for the death of their former leader.

VHS / 93 min/ Australia/1979/Action

With Short: **Felix Dopes It Out** (1924) (7 mins)

WEEK 5, Thursday 26th August

Aardman Animation Compilation 1983–1989

A collection of animations. Claymation at its best. (45)

With Shorts:

Fawlty Towers: Gourmet Dinner (1975) (30 mins)

A Star Is Bored (Looney Tunes) (1956) (7 mins)

WEEK 6, Thursday 2nd September

The Killing

After getting out of prison, Johnny Clay masterminds a complex race-track heist, but his scheme is complicated by the intervention of the wife of a teller (George Peatty) in on the scheme, the boyfriend of the wife, airport regulations, and a small dog. An early Kubrick film, and one of the primary influences on Quentin Tarantino's Reservoir Dogs.

16mm / 85 min / USA / 1956 / Drama

With Short: **Envy (Intercat)** (1951) (17 mins)

WEEK 7, Thursday 9th September

A Brief History of Time (1991)

A film about the life and work of the cosmologist, Stephen Hawking, who despite his near total paralysis, is one of the great minds of all time.

16mm / 80 min / UK / 1991 / Documentary

With Short: **Prest-O Change-O (Merrie Melodies)** (1939) (7 mins)

WEEK 8, Thursday 16th September

Adam's Rib (1949)

A woman is accused of murdering her husband and Katherine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy, both lawyers, find themselves on the opposite side of the case. Classic battle-of-the-sexes comedy.

16mm / 103 min / USA / 1949 / Comedy

With Short: **Morphology of Desire** (1998) (6 mins)

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