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WELCOME TO TOTAL FILM THE SMARTER MOVIE MAGAZINE



Happy Birthday to us! *Total Film* is 20 years old this month – so in-between celebratory drinks and pretending it's still 1997 (see our pics) we chatted with Scarlett Johansson (12 years old on issue one) about *Ghost In The Shell*, Tom Hiddleston (15) regards *Kong: Skull Island* and all the *Free Fire* gang on set. We caught up with Charlie Hunnam (16) on spiders, snakes and scorpions, Henry Cavill (13) about his beefy new role and Gemma Arterton (11) on all things feminism, as well as remembering the incomparable Carrie Fisher. Back when *TF* first appeared, I was graduating from uni and hoping to become a film journalist. It's testament to *Total Film*'s unswerving integrity, unbridled enthusiasm for all things movies and amazing writing that it's still here all these years later and I feel immensely privileged to edit it. And I look forward to seeing who's editing it in another 20 years' time...

ENJOY THE ISSUE!

Jane

Jane Crowther, Editor-in-Chief

CALL SHEET THIS ISSUE'S EXTRAS



MATT MAYTUM

FEATURES EDITOR
Saw some amazing new films at Sundance this year. But it's Robert Redford who still creates a major buzz when he stomps around. Legend.



JORDAN FARLEY

NEWS EDITOR
Floored by footage from *Alien: Covenant*. One scene was enough to convince me it's going to be the scariest (and ickiest) *Alien* since 1979.



JAMIE GRAHAM

EDITOR-AT-LARGE
It was fun comparing facial hair with the *Free Fire* cast. They all wanted to rock a handlebar mustache but Michael Smiley got there first and bagged the look.



MATTHEW LEYLAND

REVIEWS EDITOR
Very much enjoyed Danny Boyle's intro to the T2 press screening, when he revealed the cast's earnest on-set pleas: "This better not be shite, Danny."

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- WOLF CREEK'S JOHN JARRATT
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- PLUS IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS, THE LATEST MOVIES AND BOOKS REVIEWED AND MORE

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Dialogue

Mail, rants, theories etc.



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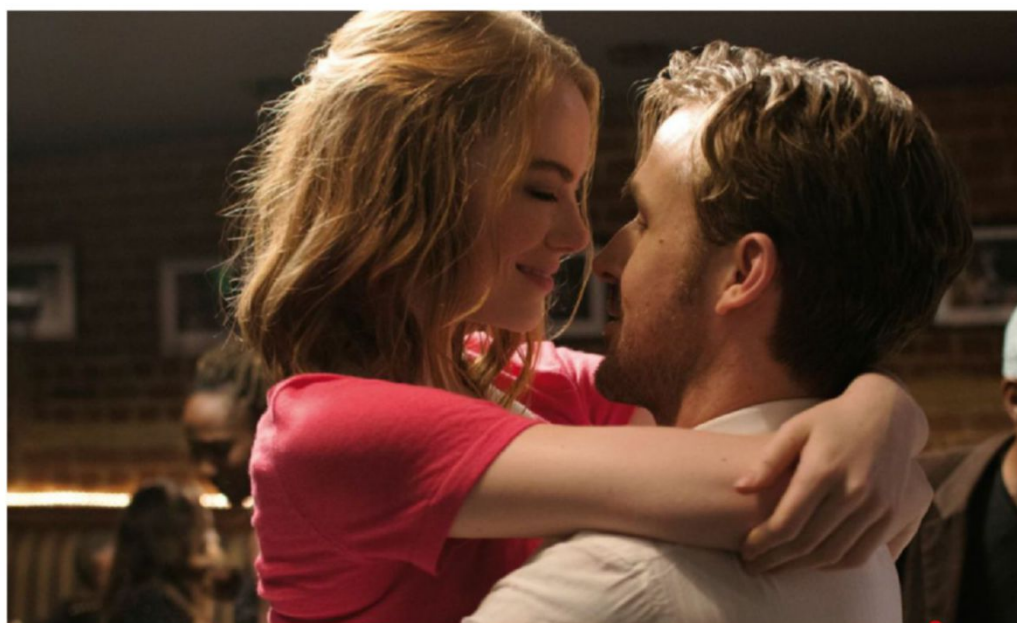
TF'S CINEMATIC AGONY
UNCLE HAS YOUR BACK.

DEAR WINGMAN

I watched the 1992 WW2 spy film *Shining Through* recently and absolutely adored it! Loved the plot and performances. Then I went to the IMDb to rate it and saw all the hate. It won Razzies for Worst Picture, Director and Actress and was nominated for Worst Actor and Screenplay! I couldn't believe it. I found Michael Douglas magnificent and Melanie Griffith at least decent. What do you think?
JIMMY KOLOKATHIS, VIA EMAIL

WINGMAN SAYS...

Not to rub it in, but the film also won Worst Picture at The Stinkers Bad Movie Awards, which we didn't even know was a thing. But so what? Haters gonna hate. Your takeaway was enjoyment, so you win. As for us, we'll say that we've seen worse and leave it diplomatically at that. Question/confession for Uncle Wings? Email me!



STAR LETTER

★ A friend of mine loves to watch films on her laptop at home – but as I told her, watching a film in the cinema, especially in IMAX 3D with hundreds of people, is far, far better. Over the last few weeks, I've seen *The Bye Bye Man* (not great, but scary for a 15), *Manchester By The Sea*, *La La Land* and *Split* in packed cinemas. People who watch on a small screen don't know the fun they're missing; the best place to see films, good, bad or indifferent, is the cinema.

JOHN CURTIS, CIRENCESTER



The communal experience is hard to beat – so long as the commune stays off its smartphones, minimises the audio commentary and doesn't scuttle to the loo blocking *Dialogue's* view of the nudey bits in *T2 Trainspotting* (true story). What

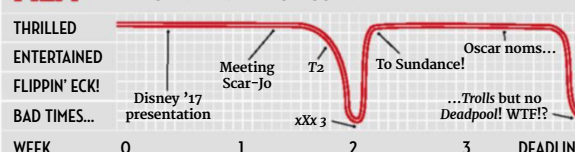
do others think? Does screen size matter? John and everyone with a letter printed here will receive a copy of *The Girl On The Train*, available now on digital download, Blu-ray and DVD from Entertainment One. Didn't send an address? Email it! Without minor delay!

ABOUT TIM

I just had to reply to Hannah from Fareham's letter in issue 254 with its less-than-subtle dig at Timothy Dalton as James Bond. After Daniel Craig, Timothy Dalton is the best Bond, an actor who showed 007 in a more

CINEMATIC FEEL
Are the likes of *La La Land* better on the big screen?

FILM REFLECTIVE INTEREST CURVE™





Carrie Fisher and mother Debbie Reynolds. RIP.



realistic light. OK, nearly everything else Dalton has done has stunk, but his Bond was good, dammit!

OWEN HOLLIFIELD, CAERPHILLY

Agree he was a good 007, if only for his *Living Daylights* battle with the killer milkman, like a cross between *Benny Hill* and *The Raid*. Disagree about the stinkiness – what about *Hot Fuzz*? *Flash Gordon*? And his Mr. Pricklepants is the Sean Connery of stuffed hedgehogs.

RIP CARRIE AND DEBBIE

So sad to hear of the untimely deaths of Carrie Fisher and her mother Debbie Reynolds. Not only were both women brilliant actresses with sex appeal, intelligence and quirky humour, they were pioneers who helped women achieve meatier roles on screen. Strange to reflect that both made their breakout movies as 19-year-olds (Carrie in *Star Wars* and Debbie in *Singin' In The Rain*). Though sadly missed, I'm sure the two ladies will continue to inspire many

generations with their performances in their numerous film roles.

STEPHEN MCCARTHY, GLASGOW

Well said, Stephen. For TF's own tribute to a pair of Hollywood greats, see feature starting p138.

LONDON BRAWLING

I've had a great idea for a reboot of a certain franchise. It's Christmas Eve and there's a party at the top of London's tallest building. Thieves storm the place, taking hostages. By sheer coincidence, retired LA cop John McLane (Bruce Willis) is in the vicinity; with a "Yippee-ki-yay!" he takes them on, improvising weapons and tactics as he goes. Eventually he discovers the leader of the gang is the son of a certain Hans Gruber (played by Tom Hardy). Ladies and gentlemen, I give you 'Die Shard'!

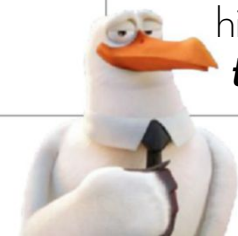
BILL COLLINS, WILLENHALL

Sounds like a *London Bridge* too far to us, Bill. We'd be up for Frank Miller's Gherkin City, though.

OFFICE SPACED

Chatter 'gems' overheard in the Total Film office this month...

* "I'm not against turnips." * "He actually tried to claim he wasn't a sausage maniac!" * "Don't 'office spaced' me for saying this, but I have very high standards for apples." * "Storks was the animated bird movie of last year!!"



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UP CLOSE WITH ROBERT REDFORD

<http://bit.ly/2jVkuUls>

Our first day at this year's Sundance Film Festival, and who do we bump into? Only the A-list legend that founded it! But why so serious? Either it was something we said, or someone had stolen all the chairs.



NEW LOGAN TRAILER

<http://bit.ly/2kppHZq>

"About damn time we had an R-rated *Wolverine* movie," said @Cheetara800m, echoing the views of many. New mutant X-23 went down particularly well.



BLAIR WITCH BISCUIT

<http://bit.ly/2jZ8QQF>

Marking the woodland sorceress' Blu-ray bow, Friday 13th brought us a spooky cookie in the form of a *Blair Witch* stick figure. The 'rope', 'dirt' and press release were all edible. Culinary witchcraft!



LEMONY SNICKET CAKE

<http://bit.ly/2kobTm3>

Celebrating the launch of *A Series Of Unfortunate Events*, Netflix whipped up "a horrible gift" that was nothing of the sort. The 'bite mark' was in fact an artful bit of icing, and yes, it did have a lemony flavour.



HELL OR HIGH WATER LUNCH

<http://bit.ly/2jmNYSi>

Courtesy of London's @TexasJoes and #HellOrHighWaterDVD, the bar for Monday lunch was set all the way to the heavens by this BBQ banquet. Only thing missing was a sofa to snooze on afterwards...



HARRELSON IN THE HAN SOLO MOVIE

<http://bit.ly/2jaCZbb>

"I'm cool with this so long as his *Hunger Games* hairstyle is nowhere to be seen," said @deltablues of Woody's casting. "They have to give him a rubber hand," quipped @Wtrueman.



PETER DINKLAGE IN AVENGERS INFINITY WAR?

<http://bit.ly/2kolAAO>

If so, who could he play? "M.O.D.O.K." (@Sdiq_) "Mephisto" (@freeinfmation); "Tyrion Lannister?" (@shalevai); "Your mum" (@jHUDSONPOWER).



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CRYING GAMES

Continuing the theme of films that make you cry [see previous Dialogues], I have a strange one – Adam Sandler's *Click*. I was a massive Sandler fan back when I saw it (not so much now) and even at a young age it struck a chord. I was expecting another goofy comedy à la *The Waterboy* or *Billy Madison*; instead I got a deeply moving depiction of the importance of family. I recently rewatched it with a friend and we were both tear-soaked by the end. Anyone else cried at *Click* or am I giving Sandler too much credit?

KONAL WOOD, VIA EMAIL

Films that have reduced me to tears? Cara Delevingne's acting in *Suicide Squad* certainly made my eyes water. The recent *Fantastic Four* had me sobbing with relief when it ended and I was practically bored to tears during *Allied*. The film that made me cry the most though was *Arrival*. It wasn't so much Amy Adams' performance (moving though it was), but that a rather heavy-set gentleman fell on me as he was leaving.

THOMAS ELLIS, VIA EMAIL

How about movies that make you laugh inappropriately? Watching *Allied*, when... [SPOILER REMOVED!] and the baby started crying, I laughed REALLY loudly; my wife elbowed me in the arm and told me to be quiet. Pretty much the same thing happened during *Rogue One* when the child started crying during the scenes on



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Jedha. So it appears I subconsciously find children in peril in movies funny. I realise this is wrong but am hoping others will have similarly inappropriate tales to share!

RUSS TRIBE, FAREHAM

Looks like we've got two new readers' challenges here: stuff you shouldn't have laughed at (not distressed moppets – Russ has single-handedly filled that quota) and bizarre multiplex injuries. Have you ever caught anything delicate in a fold-up seat? Jarred an elbow in a cup-holder? Followed an unwitting usher's torch

into an ankle-twisting abyss? Share your war stories with us!

POWER OF '03

Regarding the best year for films, I'd like to give a shout-out to 2003. A lot screams to my mind: my first year of college, coming out to my friends and witnessing a brilliant year in film (and getting into 18 films at 17). *Finding Nemo*, *Kill Bill: Vol. 1*, *Mystic River*, *X2* and the most powerful film I've ever seen, *Thirteen*. But it was also a year for terrible follow-ups: *Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle*, *American Wedding*, *Terminator 3*... times when I had to wear my popcorn bucket on my head because I can't bear to watch the car crash on the screen.

SCOTT READING, LONDON

Not to be all Constable Total Film, but two things: always empty popcorn buckets before placing on your head (or at least remove those weird ball-bearing bits you get); and try not to sneak under-age into films. Mind you, would be ace if someone could pull off the standing-on-your-mate's-shoulders-under-a-big-coat trick, if only to prove the *The Beano* hasn't lied to us all these years.

BEST FILM YEAR?
2003 brought us *Nemo*, *Kill Bill*, *Mystic River* and more.

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TEASERS

COMING ATTRACTIONS

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- * Sci-fi sequel **35 years in the making** **p19**
- * Suit up, it's **morphin' time!** **p26**
- * Discussing **M. Night's** latest twist **p32**

EDITED BY JORDAN FARLEY

EXCLUSIVE

SICK BOY

A CURE FOR WELLNESS | Dane DeHaan checks into a scary sanatorium in Gore Verbinski's striking psychological horror.

The world is not well. Five minutes in front of the news will tell you that. But when the placebo effect of detoxing, oxygen shots and the latest health craze no longer helps, where will people turn? That's the question that *Pirates Of The Caribbean* director Gore Verbinski and his *Lone Ranger* scribe Justin Haythe found themselves asking. "It's a great con, I think," the softly spoken Verbinski says over the phone. "You're not well, but there's a cure. You get caught in a loop. It's playing upon hope. But, of course, nobody ever gets better."

Emerging from discussions about Thomas Mann's 1924 novel *The Magic Mountain*, which "deals with people clutching onto their sickness like a badge, before the outbreak of World

War One", Verbinski's latest is set in and around a mysterious 'wellness' centre located in the Swiss Alps. It's a place where the rich and powerful pay over the odds to receive the Cure

— a water-based treatment for a nebulous ailment with indefinable results. "It's taking this idea of denial and putting it into a contemporary gothic narrative," Verbinski explains. "Who doesn't want a note from your doctor if you're not well and not responsible? Particularly in a place where you might bump into Dick Cheney in the steam bath."

Starring *Chronicle*'s Dane DeHaan, it's the story of Lockhart, a Wall Street exec who's sent to retrieve his company's absent and seemingly

WORKING IT OUT
DeHaan's Lockhart is sent to retrieve his boss from a mysterious Swiss health retreat.



unhinged CEO from the wellness centre. But Lockhart isn't your typical horror movie protagonist. In fact, he's quite unlikeable. "It's always fun when you get permission to be an asshole," laughs DeHaan. In a similar vein to Martin Scorsese's 2010 thriller *Shutter Island*, the line between arrogant outsider and hapless patient becomes blurred when a devastating car crash leaves Lockhart's leg broken and his grip on reality increasingly strained. "He slips out of time as we approach this place," Verbinski teases. "Your phone doesn't work anymore. Your watch stops. That's one of the things about this genre – you're kind of slipping into this dream logic."

The wellness centre, much like *The Shining*'s Overlook Hotel, has its own terrible history – one that figures into the film's rabbit-hole mystery. And though the centre may seem idyllic on the surface, it quickly becomes clear a dark underbelly lurks within. "When we first arrive in this place, it's wonderful,"

Verbinski says.

"These people seem genuinely happy here.

They're resting in their bathrobes and playing croquet and taking their treatments and

getting massages. The first treatments are benign. They're quite relaxing. But as you descend to the lower levels, there's a backstory – this place is rebuilding something that's much older. It's a descent into darkness."

Verbinski has form as a horror director – he's the man behind the surprisingly solid *Ring* remake – and with a near two-and-a-half-hour running time, plus some staggering visuals to show for the five-month shoot, his sights are set on the best films the genre has to offer. "He was talking in a very ambitious way," DeHaan recalls. "He'd say, 'I want to make a movie like *The Shining*, like *Rosemary's Baby*, like these old-time horror movies,' which are the horror movies I like. Then I read the script, and it seemed like he could."

"I think *The Shining* and *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Exorcist* are on another level. They transcend genre," Verbinski adds. "They're all, in their essence,

pulp. They're B-movies. But in execution, they become something else." That 'something else' is seen increasingly rarely in these Blumhouse-dominated days of ultra-low budgets and lightning fast shoots. And in Kubrickian fashion, Verbinski put DeHaan through the wringer – suspending him in a giant water tank for days at a time and tossing him around the back seat of a car while simulating a visceral crash. "We had a car like a rotisserie chicken – it'd be turning around and around, and I would be just flying, hitting the roof of the car," DeHaan says. "My arm actually popped out of its socket. I told Gore, 'You have to use that take.' He says he did, but I think he actually cut right before my arm pops out!"

Luckily for DeHaan, mad doctor du jour Jason Isaacs was on hand to mend that (fictional) broken leg, if not the (real) dislocated shoulder. For the second time in recent months – following his twisted turn in Brit

Marling's Netflix series *The OA* – Isaacs plays a scientist who indulges in decidedly unconventional experiments on his patients. "I think he's delicious,"

Verbinski says of the cult Brit actor. "We had long chats about not overdoing it, not twisting your pinkie. The best villains are right. And he's right about one thing – they're decidedly unwell from this modern life. It's just that the cure may be much worse than the disease..."

With his last four films boasting budgets in excess of \$100 million each, *A Cure For Wellness* marks a return to the contained projects of Verbinski's early career. He found the shift artistically refreshing. "It was nice to do something that wasn't based on a theme park ride or something based on existing intellectual property," Verbinski confides. "It was nice to conjure something out of nowhere, and do it on a scale where we could be off the radar and left alone. It's the hardest film to make, these days." **JF**

ETA | 24 FEBRUARY / A CURE FOR WELLNESS OPENS LATER THIS MONTH.

'AS YOU DESCEND TO THE LOWER LEVELS, IT'S A DESCENT INTO DARKNESS'



TOP

A car crash sees Lockhart himself become a patient at the wellness centre.

ABOVE

It's soon apparent that not all is at it seems at the centre, headed by Jason Isaacs' odd doc.

RIGHT

Some of the centre's treatments aren't quite as appealing as they first appeared...





13



'IT'S AN EXCITING
CONCEPT...AND ONLY
GETS BETTER WITH OUR
INCREDIBLE CAST'
ZACK SNYDER

EXCLUSIVE

THE BIG LEAGUE

JUSTICE LEAGUE | DC's supers assemble in the make or break team-up movie.

There's no denying that DC's Extended Universe got off to a wobbly cinematic start. *Man Of Steel*, *Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Justice* and *Suicide Squad* were all greeted with commercial success, but critical disdain. If Zack Snyder can pull this film off, 2017 will be the year that all that changes.

The fifth film in the DCEU (following *Wonder Woman* in June) is the full-blown team-up movie *BvS* merely teased, and it's this group dynamic, says Snyder, that will reinvigorate the nascent superhero series. "One of the more rewarding aspects of creating *Justice League* was having fun exploring the dynamic between this diverse group of larger-than-life characters with disparate backgrounds, ethics and unique perspectives all trying to come together and work as a team," the director/DCEU mastermind tells *Teasers*, hinting at the film's game-changing injection of humour.

"It not only offers an opportunity for great drama and complex relationships, but it also often results in great fun. It's an exciting concept to explore and it only gets better when you add the component of our incredibly talented cast – their chemistry really adds to that dynamic."

That cast includes familiar faces: Ben Affleck's Batman, Gal Gadot's Wonder Woman and Henry Cavill's Superman – still six feet under when the film starts – as well as showcasing new metas The Flash (Ezra Miller), Aquaman (Jason Momoa) and Cyborg

(Ray Fisher). Inspired by Superman's selfless sacrifice during the battle against Doomsday, and cognisant of what's to come, Bruce Wayne joins with Diana Prince to assemble a team to stop Ciarán Hinds' Steppenwolf – right hand man to big bad Darkseid – and his army of Parademons.

Not unlike the MCU's Infinity Stones, the League will be chasing a trio of MacGuffins – the powerful Mother Boxes – which were sent to our world and ended up in the possession of the Atlanteans, the Amazonians and mankind, three races represented by the tooled-up trifecta here. The location of two remain a mystery. But we already know what happened to mankind's Mother Box – it's seen imbuing Victor Stone, aka Cyborg, with his incredible abilities in *BvS*, though the luminescent weapon seen in this image is a new addition to Cyborg's Swiss-army knife body.

Can Snyder's superpowered team put the DCEU back on the comic-book movie map? Based on what we've seen, it's already in a different league. **JF**

ETA | 17 NOVEMBER / JUSTICE LEAGUE
OPENS LATER THIS YEAR.



HOT RIGHT NOW

WOODY HARRELSON

FORCE OF NATURE...

Ever wondered where Han Solo got his flyboy chops from? An answer is coming in the shape of Woody Harrelson. After earning his franchise spurs in *The Hunger Games* and the imminent *War For The Planet Of The Apes*, the former *Cheers* barman will (probably) prop up spaceport bars in another franchise heavyweight, Phil Lord and Chris Miller's as-yet-untitled Han Solo *Star Wars* anthology movie.

Whether Harrelson is fast enough to out-run Imperial slugs seems undoubtable, going by his recent rapid-fire work-rate. He's just directed one-take movie *Lost In London*, based on his tipsy run-in with police in 2002, plus starring roles due in 2017 offer an indie-cred spread, ranging from Martin (In Bruges) McDonagh's *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* to Destin (Short

Term 12) Cretton's *The Glass Castle* and graphic-novel adap *Wilson*.

But first, we'll see his Colonel confronting Caesar in the altogether larger *War For The Planet Of The Apes*. Much larger, says Harrelson. "It took me a little while to get used to it because it was definitely the biggest thing I've been a part of. It was like going to work at a city, literally."

He'd better get used to that, because Disney won't be thinking small for Han's semi-solo spin-off, in which Harrelson joins *Hail, Caesar!*'s Alden Ehrenreich (Han Solo), Donald Glover (Lando Calrissian) and, in an unnamed role, Emilia Clarke. Harrelson will be playing Garriss Shrike, who previously appeared in 1997 book *The Paradise Snare*. "I'm a mentor to Han, but I'm also a bit of a criminal. I don't think I should say much more than that, because the Force is not allowing me."

But his excitement won't be suppressed. "It's mind-blowing. I never would've imagined that I'd get this opportunity, so I'm really pumped about it. I really like those directors... What a cool thing." You won't catch us arguing. **KIT**

ETA | 14 JULY / *WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES* OPENS THIS SUMMER. THE UNTITLED HAN SOLO FILM OPENS IN 2018.

Writer-star Johnny Harris mines his own past for this tale of a boxer struggling with addiction.

EXCLUSIVE

HEAVY HITTER

JAWBONE | Johnny Harris' writing debut packs real wallop...

Ever since he garnered rave reviews for his turn as a slimeball pimp in 2006's *London To Brighton*, Bafta-nominated Johnny Harris has been trading in tough, tender, truthful performances – even as one of the seven dwarves in *Snow White And The Huntsman*.

His writing debut, *Jawbone*, is no exception. Digging deep into Jimmy McCabe (Harris), it tracks the tentative journey of this ex-boxing champ as he seeks help for the one fight he can't win – against the bottle. Turning up at his old gym, he tries to get back into a semblance of shape for an underground fight, and leans on

gym owner Bill (Ray Winstone) and cornerman Eddie (Michael Smiley) to mentor him.

"I was a national champion as a 16-year-old, so the club and the people within it... this is a love letter to those people," Harris explains. "It was only later that I realised how they guided me as a boy. I wanted to look at that world

as opposed to the seedy, sinister side of boxing. Benevolent, charitable men. Unsung heroes. They transform lives."

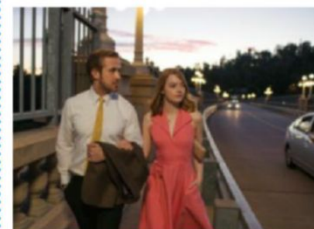
Jawbone is a courageous, strikingly personal work, and Harris admits that he also knows plenty about addiction. He doesn't want to go into it, but does say, "I used to drink heavily and I don't anymore," before stressing that it doesn't have to be seen as a film about alcoholism. "Anyone who wants to ask for help in life and can't will maybe relate to this story on some level," he says. "It's a spiritual malady. As Ray's character says, 'Sometimes you have to give in to win.' For some people that's such a struggle in life. You're instilled with these values. Boys don't cry..."

It's a sentiment that will doubtless be put to the test by this excellent drama. **JG**

ETA | 17 MARCH / *JAWBONE* OPENS NEXT MONTH.

TOTAL FILM TOP 10

TF's ever-evolving 2017 movie league table...



01 LA LA LAND

Never mind its record-equalling 14 Oscar noms, Damien Chazelle's delightful musical has danced to the summit of our top 10.

02 MANCHESTER BY THE SEA

03 TONI ERDMANN

04 JACKIE

In Pablo Larrain's drama set after JFK's murder, a Chanel-sporting Natalie Portman sizzles as Jackie O – that's gotta be 'O' for Oscar, right?



05 A MONSTER CALLS

06 T2 TRAINSPOTTING

07 HACKSAW RIDGE

08 JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2

09 SILENCE

Voters may have ignored Martin Scorsese's priest pic in this year's awards season, but we still feel the need to confess (our love for it).



10 SPLIT





TRAILER BREAKDOWN

GREAT EGG-SPECTATIONS

ALIEN: COVENANT | Ridley Scott brings H.R. Giger's acid-blooded xenomorph back to the big screen in the horror sequel of 2017...

01



Chestbusters? Old news. Say hello to the backbuster, an embryo that grows into new nasty, the neomorph. Rumours suggest we'll see neos bursting out of other body parts too. Gross.

02



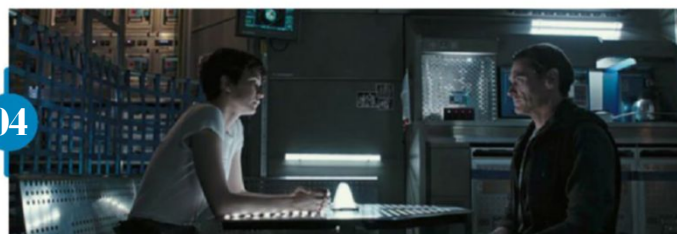
Colonists haven't had the best of luck in the *Alien* series, and the crew of colony ship the *Covenant* aren't seeming likely to buck that trend after settling on Engineer home planet Paradise.

03



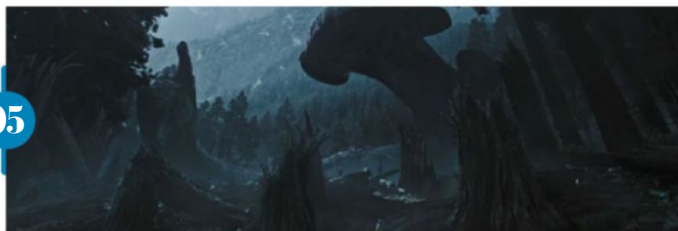
Michael Fassbender pulls double duties as android David and new "artificial person" Walter. Quite what David is doing about his missing body remains to be seen, but it's likely he'll cause trouble.

04



In an exchange reminiscent of *Alien*, Daniels (Katherine Waterston) questions captain Billy Crudup's surface excursion. If the instantly familiar eggs they find are anything to go by, her wariness is valid.

05



Back on Paradise, the crew of the *Covenant* discover a crashed Engineer ship. *Alien: Covenant* may be embracing *Alien*'s horror origins, but it's retaining the scope and majesty of *Prometheus*.

06



The trailer's money shot (in more ways than one) – the return of the xeno in all its spiky-tailed, pharyngeal-jawed glory, making quick work of an intimate couple in the shower. Bloody brilliant. **JF**

ETA | 19 MAY 2017 / ALIEN: COVENANT OPENS THIS SPRING.



FIRST LOOK

FUTURE FANTASTIC

BLADE RUNNER 2049 | The sci-fi supersequel hovers on the horizon. And it looks glorious...

The 35-year gap between *Blade Runner* and its sequel is almost over ('just' eight months to go), and if anticipation wasn't at fever pitch already (it was), it went positively radioactive when the first trailer dropped a few days before Christmas.

A mix of the familiar (murky neo-noir streets, flying cars, a strong hint of Vangelis' iconic score in Jóhan Jóhannsson's thrilling music) and the new (snow instead of rain, vast desertscapes as we venture beyond the limits of future-LA), it offers a mesmerising glimpse of a new blade runner, LA cop K (Ryan Gosling), questing for Rick Deckard (Harrison Ford), who's been missing for the last 30 years.

Finding him, it seems, is key to staving off some imminent threat that might just plunge this teetering society into even deeper chaos. "I did your job once. I was good at it," bass-rumbles Deckard, emerging from the shadows. "Things were simpler then," comes K's spine-icing reply.

Director Denis Villeneuve, who prepared himself for the scope of *Blade Runner 2049* by making stunning 2016 sci-fi *Arrival*, admits he hesitated before committing, saying, "It was the biggest artistic challenge I've had." Ridley Scott's 1982 original is one of his favourite movies, which added to the stress: "I was like, 'I'm a hardcore fan, I don't want to fuck that up.'"

Judging from the trailer, it seems unlikely, with Roger Deakins' moody lensing, the stunning set design and a seamless mix of practical and CG environments being enough to make *Teasers* punch the smoggy, neon-strafed sky. The support cast is

RUNNING MAN
Ryan Gosling takes centre-stage as new blade runner K, while (below) Ridley Scott is back as producer and Harrison Ford returns as Deckard.

strong – Robin Wright, Jared Leto, Dave Bautista, Barkhad Abdi, Ana de Armas – and Scott, who here acts as producer, insists the script is every bit as special as you'd hope given it's penned by Hampton Fancher, the man behind the original, and Michael Green (*Logan*, *Alien: Covenant*).

"Harrison said, 'Meh,' and I said, 'No, read this,'" shares Scott of the moment when Ford finally put aside his long-held conviction to stay out of any sequel. "And I think he said, 'This is the best script I've ever had.'"

Gosling, it seems, had a ball working with Ford. "They say never meet your heroes," he says "but the addendum to that is: unless they're Harrison Ford, because he's a cool motherfucker." The Gos didn't even mind being punched in the face by Ford during a fight scene.

"It just happened," he shrugs. "But what was funny was, when it was over, they brought ice for my face, and Harrison pushed me out of the way and stuck his fist in the ice." **JG**

ETA | 6 OCTOBER /
BLADE RUNNER 2049
OPENS THIS AUTUMN.





YOU TALKIN' TO ME?

Film quotes pose as questions. Film stars try to cope.

IN THE CROSSHAIRS THIS MONTH: **HUGH BONNEVILLE**

Are you talking to me?

I certainly am, though I wish we were doing this face to face, then I could say, "Here's looking at you, kid."

Do you like what you do for a living, these things you see?

When you're in a magnificent part of India, like Jodhpur, filming in a maharaja's palace, you think, "It can't get much better than this." On the other hand, when you're in a cold trailer somewhere at the back of Primrose Hill, talking to a stick whose name is Paddington, you don't see the bright side so much.

Have you ever danced with the devil in the pale moonlight?

I have, and his name is Tim McInnerny. I can remember Tim McInnerny dancing like a whirling dervish at his 40th birthday party, shortly after we'd made *Notting Hill*. I thought at the time, "This is what it must be like dancing with the devil."

What's your favourite scary movie?

The one that always stays with me is *Halloween*. I can remember watching it on my own and being of a nervous disposition, or rather, a runaway imagination. Every cupboard I opened was going to have someone jump out.

If you could change something in your life, anything at all, what would it be?

A new back, please. It's increasingly rickety as I get older. I so long to get back on the parallel bars and fulfil my ice-skating potential and to dance *Swan Lake* one more time.

You talk the talk. Do you walk the walk?

I'm quite good at doing both, but rarely at the same time. I'd be hopeless in any Aaron Sorkin vehicle. I'm quite good at walking and quite good at talking – but put the two together, and it's a recipe for disaster.



'I CANNOT BELIEVE WHAT IS HAPPENING POLITICALLY. AM I AWAKE? I CAN'T BE AWAKE'

Do you feel lucky, punk?

This punk feels particularly lucky when you get a commute to work of 50 yards from a five-star hotel to be on a film set, as we did on *Viceroy's House*. I feel a very lucky punk to be working with a cuddly bear sometimes, and with Siobhan Sharpe [Jessica Hynes] in *W1A* at other times.

Why so serious?

Serious, moi? I think I'm only serious when I'm acting. The rest of the time, I like to have a laugh. I love playing characters who don't know they're funny, or who don't know they're in funny situations. That's why characters like Mr. Brown [in *Paddington*] are engaging, but he's a bit of a twit.

You ever have that feeling where you're not sure if you're awake or still dreaming?

Yes, thanks to the 21st Century political landscape. You look at your social media feed every day and you think, "This is a dream, isn't it? I cannot believe what is happening around us in the last 12 months. Am I awake? I can't be awake."

What's in California?

A lot of very fit-looking people, a lot of neurosis, some great wine, a sea that's much chillier than you expect it to be, and the centre of several industries that have changed civilisation in the last 50 years – film, TV and music and technology. So, California has it all, and a lot of air-conditioning units.

Do you surf or fight?

Both. In attempting to surf the waves, I end up fighting them.

I know you can be overwhelmed and I know you can be underwhelmed, but can you ever just be whelmed?

Life is a state of whelm-being. I look after my whelm-being by being occasionally over and under. But I think if I was eternally whelmed, life would have no value. Life would have no contrasts. To be constantly whelmed would be underwhelming.

You want to call him Ketchup?

I'll never forget when we got our first Tibetan terrier, and we got a whole load of Tibetan names. They all translated as "Breath of the moon" or "Silent river". All very good, wholesome, spiritual names. We gave this list to my then-eight-year-old son, who went upstairs to study it, to name the dog. And he came downstairs and said, "I've decided to name the dog Teddy." So I think even the most pedestrian names can give character to a loving pet. **JF**

PASSAGE TO INDIA
Hugh Bonneville as Lord Mountbatten during the final years of British India, in *Viceroy's House*.

ETA | 3 MARCH / VICEROY'S HOUSE
OPENS NEXT MONTH.



Questions taken from: *Taxi Driver*, *Se7en*, *Batman*, *Scream*, *The Sixth Sense*, *Full Metal Jacket*, *Dirty Harry*, *The Dark Knight*, *The Matrix*, *Borat*, *Apocalypse Now*, *10 Things I Hate About You*, *Paddington*



MANIFESTO

"I am writing a manifesto because I have nothing to say," Cate Blanchett declares at the start of this mesmerising, absurd and hilarious artistic experiment, in which she morphs into 13 different characters to recite the cultural musings of creatives and scholars such as Jim Jarmusch, André Breton and Claes Oldenburg. Playing a homeless man, a punk, a newsreader, a puppeteer and many others, Blanchett is nothing short of hypnotic, lending her signature gravitas and levity to German artist Julian Rosefeldt's feature debut. Even more impressive – it was shot in just 11 days. Weird, challenging and unforgettable.

FESTIVAL ROUND-UP

INDEPENDENT SPIRIT

SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL | Five talking-point films from this year's fest.



INGRID GOES WEST

Aubrey Plaza flies over the cuckoo's nest in this sharp (anti-)social media dramedy, which blends *Election*-style humour with the darkness of *Girl, Interrupted*. She's both hilarious and horrifying as unhinged loner Ingrid, whose obsession with Elizabeth Olsen's Instagoddess Taylor sees her faking it until she makes it as Taylor's new best friend. Before you can scream "*Single White Female*", Ingrid's web of lies starts to unravel with the arrival of Taylor's suspicious douchebag brother (Billy Magnussen). Pithily lampooning hipster culture while capturing the desperate loneliness of depression, this is an impressive debut from director Matt Spicer.



AN INCONVENIENT SEQUEL

It's been 10 years since ex-vice president Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* met with anger and accolades, and this none-too-timely sequel takes a look at what's happened since. Offering an incrementally more hopeful vision than its Oscar-winning predecessor, *An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth To Power* is driven by a typically charismatic Gore, who observes the growth in renewable energy but also the destructive consequences of global warming. And, naturally, Hurricane Trump is a looming threat – his hot-aired proclamations blow gale-force throughout in news footage and sound bites, hinting that the fight is about to get that much harder.



THE WOUND

John Trengove's drama sheds unflinching light on Ukwaluka, an initiation into manhood by the Xhosa people of South Africa. Young men are taken to the mountains of the Eastern Cape, ritually circumcised and tended to by older 'caregivers'. Central among the caregivers is Xolani (Nakhane Touré), a taciturn factory worker keeping his sexuality a secret. His charge is Kwanda (Niza Jay Ncoyini), a city boy who needs toughening up, according to his elders. What results is a fascinating study of masculinity, tradition and taboos, explored through the lens of a culture that will be almost entirely unfamiliar to western audiences.



BRIGSBY BEAR

Defying easy genre classification, this dramedy is high on Sundance quirk, but also big-hearted, poignant and very, very funny. James (co-writer Kyle Mooney) was kidnapped at a young age, and raised in a bunker by his captor 'parents' (Mark Hamill, Jane Adams). Hamill's Ted crafts his own rickety sci-fi show, 'Brigsby Bear', which he pipes in to James. When he's released, and struggling to adjust to the outside world, James copes the only way he can: making a 'Brigsby Bear' movie to conclude his hero's adventures. A winning, non-patronising ode to the restorative power of genre fiction and the collaborative community spirit of filmmaking. **MM/JW**



EXCLUSIVE

MAKING A STAND

AQUARIUS | A Brazilian widow fights for her home in Kleber Mendonça Filho's fiery drama.

Film-making isn't inherently political, but in the hands of former film critic turned writer/director Kleber Mendonça Filho, the simple act of storytelling forced an entire nation to sit up and take note. "As a cinephile, I'm aware that films sometimes become something... more," Filho tells *Teasers* in December, after a whirlwind 2016. "This clearly happened to *Aquarius* in Brazil."

Filho's *Neighbouring Sounds* follow-up drew the Brazilian government's ire at the 2016 Cannes film festival. With the eyes of the world on the Croisette, director and cast used the film's red carpet premiere to protest against the suspension of President Dilma Rousseff with placards reading, "Brazil is experiencing a coup d'état."

It wasn't opportunism. The story of a 65-year-old former music critic who refuses to leave her apartment despite sinister strong arm tactics by property developers had unpredictable parallels with real world upheaval. "Dilma was impeached on 31 August, and the film opened on 1 September," Filho recalls. "So people were watching this fiction narrative about this very strong-willed woman who is standing her ground, and then they were watching this other

strong-willed woman being kicked out of her building by corrupt politicians. It was an insane moment."

Political parallels or not, there's little question *Aquarius* is a film worthy of the unprecedented attention it attracted. The drama uses the urban renewal in Recife as the backdrop for a profoundly intimate, 140-minute character study. A great deal of the film's success can be attributed to Brazilian screen icon Sônia Braga, who gives the performance of a lifetime as the obstinate, flawed and fascinatingly complex Dona Clara. "It's rare in cinema to see that kind of character being alive – not the granny type character," says Filho. "Some of the tension comes from the way society looks at women. Or, like it's said in English, a woman of a certain age."

HOUSE PROUD
Sônia Braga is superb as the resident taking on the developers.

Clara is not a saint. In one memorable sequence her reaction to discovering a porn shoot above her apartment is to hire an escort for the evening. But her refusal to bend to the whims of loathsome suits proves an air-punching act of defiance. "Clara says no to the construction people – it becomes a political act," Filho explains. "Society expects her to say yes."

From competition in Cannes to a symbol of protest amid political turmoil – not bad for a little film from Brazil. "This is not a commercial movie, but it did extremely well for a two-and-a-half hour character study with a 65-year-old woman," Filho laughs. "It just became a phenomenal cultural event. It's been an amazing, crazy, fucked-up year." **JF**

ETA | 24 MARCH / AQUARIUS OPENS NEXT MONTH.





BETWEEN TAKES

JOSH GAD

THE BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
STAR TALKS LIFE ON SET...**What's the first thing you do when you arrive on set?**

Have a cup of coffee, eat a little egg white omelette with some berries, and I go to the make-up trailer.

Are there things you take on set with you?

I always like to have a book and my music. Right now, I'm reading the actual Agatha Christie novel itself of *Murder On The Orient Express* and digging for clues in that. I have very eclectic musical tastes. I really have the sensibility of a 16-year-old girl. I love pop music. I love Drake. I love Katy Perry. I love Taylor. I just love fun music that's kind of empty calories in the morning.

Do you eat a hot or a cold lunch?

I try to eat a salad. If I eat too hot a lunch, I get a little tired and lethargic. So I try to eat well on set. It's difficult. It's so tempting [to eat more]. But it's important for me to stay healthy and in a frame of mind where I can do my job.

Do you ever sleep on set?

Oh yeah. I will go in my trailer and I will pass out. Don't tempt me.

What's been your best on-set experience to date?

I have to say *Beauty And The Beast* because I was able to bring my family with me. Seeing my kids walk on those sets, it's just crazy. And also, just the opportunity to approach it like I would a theatrical event was really fun. For Dan and Emma and Luke and I to do those dance rehearsals and singing rehearsals, to get in that space – my God, that's like: "Pinch yourself."

Ever stolen anything from a set?

Yes. [dramatic pause] The ring on my finger right now. I had my ring stolen – my wedding ring, stolen – on the set

of *The Wedding Ringer*. It's ridiculous. So I said, "Screw it, I'm taking the damn ring" – which is probably worth nothing. I told them after, and they were like, "Oh, of course."

What's the longest day you've ever spent on set?

Twenty-three hours. On *The Rocker*. We were shooting in Toronto, and we had this arena for one day. We had to do three scenes in that period. And I remember Emma Stone, Rainn Wilson, Teddy Geiger and myself were just holding each other up deliriously by the end of the morning because we were so tired. We were like, "I've lost the will to live."

Do you use your phone on set?

I'm terrible – I use my phone on set. I shouldn't. And, in fact, I'm trying to get better about just not using my phone as often in general. I've had it go off during a play, which was really upsetting and embarrassing. I was watching a play, and I was convinced

I'd shut it off. I was so mortified. It was my friend Jake Gyllenhaal's play, and I was like, "What have I done?" Awful.

Most embarrassing moment on set?

The most embarrassing moment I've had as a performer was on *Book Of Mormon*. I not only went off on my lines, I forgot how to speak English. I was silent for a minute, searching for the line. People were screaming the line out to me on stage. All I heard was [makes annoying ringing noise] – like it was tinnitus. I had to improv. The improv I came up with was: "What the fuck am I supposed to say next?" I was so upset by somebody in the audience who absolutely just had the worst behaviour. I kept obsessing about that. I let it affect me. It was a great lesson, because you've got to be in the moment. It was about a year into the run, and at that point, I'm like, "Oh God, it's time – I have to move on." JC

ETA | 17 MARCH 2017 / BEAUTY AND THE BEAST OPENS NEXT MONTH.

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO CRIME DRAMA! **BOOKS FILM TV**

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Last week, I was trawling Amazon when I stumbled upon the German disc for *The Zombie King*. Not heard of it? The same would go for me, had I not been on set in Somerset in 2013, stood amid clucking chickens as I tried to interview a disengaged Edward Furlong and catch even a glimpse of the movie's other 'star', Corey Feldman.

Furlong, a sweet guy, mumbled staccato answers and concluded each hanging sentence with, "Rock 'n' roll, man, rock 'n' roll." Feldman, meanwhile, repeatedly postponed our talk via a morning nap, a never-ending shower, a protracted costume fitting and a late-afternoon doze, before finally allowing me access to his trailer at 7pm. Still, it all made for lovely background colour... or would've done had this dire horror-comedy (I watched that German DVD) about voodoo and the underworld and yokels staving off the zombie apocalypse ever got a UK release, allowing my piece to run.

PUFF PIECES

Collating good material only for it to go up in a puff of smoke is, in the modern parlance, a real ball-ache. That said, sometimes it's half-expected – if, like *Total Film*, you're keen to support fledgling filmmakers by visiting the sets of their low-budget features, there's always the chance they'll fail to find space in a cluttered market place. Take *Deviation*, starring Danny Dyer, whose colourful insights on schizophrenia never made it off the digital recorder. Or *Outside Bet*, titled 'Weighed In: The Story Of The Mumper' when TF

IT SHOULDN'T HAPPEN TO A FILM JOURNALIST

Editor-at-Large JAMIE GRAHAM lifts the lid on film journalism.

THIS MONTH WASTED ACCESS



Watching that exclusive feature go up in flames at Skyfall Lodge...

was on set, which provided unused interviews with Bob Hoskins, Rita Tushingham and Jenny Agutter.

Other times it catches you by surprise, with the names and buzz attached making it seem certain you're tucking a scoop into the back pocket only for it to stay there. Back in 2013, when TF went on set of *The Adventurer: The Curse Of The Midas Box* and chatted to Michael Sheen, Lena Headey, Sam Neill, Ioan Gruffudd and Aneurin Barnard (then being tipped as the new Doctor Who), 'word' had it that this fantastical mystery

putting Good against Evil was the new *Harry Potter*; it went on to take \$6,399 at the US box office, and snuck out on DVD in the UK. Similarly, a few years ago in Cannes, I was delighted to be awarded the only UK interview with a legendary director, only for his anticipated masterpiece to be declared a disasterpiece (yes, I'm stealing wordplay from *Tattoo Fixers* – what of it?) and shoved on a shelf. There it still gathers dust, and I remain circumspect as to the filmmaker's identity in the hope that it will one day get a release and my cobwebbed exclusive can be given a spring clean.

CLASSIFIED FILES

There is all manner of wasted access, for all manner of reasons. The journalist I know, for example, who years ago spoke to a ferociously candid Russell Crowe only for the interview, full of screaming pull-quotes, to be frantically embargoed. Or something as mundane as the time I spoke to John Carpenter for 90 golden minutes only to have my commission chopped from 3,000 words to 300.

The toughest break happened to a colleague of mine. The only journalist on the Skyfall Lodge set of the 23rd Bond film, she went exploring inside, hung out at the Skyfall gate, plodded through the Bond family graves, caressed the Aston Martin with mounted guns, climbed into one of Silva's helicopter gunships and, at dusk, witnessed the Lodge explode into towering flames. Then her access was considered too spoilerific. The plug was pulled. Now *that's* a ball-ache – suddenly not being able to write about Edward Furlong tiptoeing through sheep shit seems like no big deal.

Jamie will return next issue...
For more misadventures, follow:
[@jamie_graham9](#) on Twitter.

'WORD HAD IT THIS WAS THE NEW HARRY POTTER. IT TOOK \$6,399 AT THE US BOX OFFICE'



ON SET

FOLLOWING SUIT

POWER RANGERS |

Project Almanac's Dean Israelite reinvents a campy kids classic...

Real, grounded, kinetic," is how Dean Israelite describes the action sequences on *Power Rangers* – his big budget reboot of the campy kids show. He is, of course, aware that these aren't words usually associated with a property better known for its dodgy sets and blokes in rubber suits kung fu-ing the heck out of each other.

This *Power Rangers* will be both faithful and fresh, insists Israelite when *Teasers* meets him on set. Citing Amblin movies as influences, he describes the film as, "A coming of age story. The journey of these five kids becoming the Power Rangers is also the journey of them growing up."

The new film winds the story right back to 1993's original *Mighty Morphin* TV series. Set in the Californian town of Angel Grove (in reality Vancouver and a variety of locations around British Columbia), it sees five high-school kids coming together in detention before making a discovery that will change their lives forever, transforming them into the colour-coded, planet-defending team. Think *The Breakfast Club* with powers, giant "Zords" and an evil space witch.

It's early in the filming process and we're here to see the scene in which the team discover the Power Coins that grant them their powers. It's our chance to meet the five Rangers: Newcomer Dacre Montgomery as Jason Scott, Red Ranger; pop star Becky G. as Trini Kwan, Yellow Ranger; owner of the most intense stare *Total Film* has ever encountered, Ludi Lin as Zack Taylor, Black Ranger; and Brit actress Naomi Scott as Kimberly Hart, Pink Ranger. Completing the line-up is *Me, Earl And The Dying Girl*'s RJ Cyler as Billy Cranston, Blue Ranger – a whirlwind of wise-cracks on and off screen.

Pitted against them (and Bryan Cranston's Zordon and Bill Hader's Alpha-5) is Elizabeth Banks as Rita Repulsa, a "deliciously weird" villain according to Israelite. "She perfectly toes the line of being both truthful and dramatic and also an incredible comedic actress." She's not here today, but we witness the Rangers begin their heroic journeys and get their asses comprehensively whooped by hologramatic Putties – Rita's squidgy shocktroops – in a training scenario.

But despite the inherent madness of the source material, Israelite is insistent the film will remain accessible to both kids and older fans thanks to its relatable heroes. "This isn't about billionaire inventors becoming superheroes. Every kid in the audience should be looking at these characters and going, 'That's me.'" **WS**

ETA | 24 MARCH / POWER RANGERS OPENS NEXT MONTH.

RANGER DANGER

Elizabeth Banks is on big bad duty as Rita Repulsa.





ABOVE
Becky G., RJ Cyler, Naomi Scott, Dacre Montgomery and Ludi Lin line up as the high-school outsiders destined for Rangerdom.

ABOVE LEFT
The new crew discover the Power Coins.

LEFT
Suited up, the Rangers soon become a tight unit.

FAR LEFT
Bill Hader supplies the voice for Alpha 5, robo-ally to the Rangers and buddy to Zordon.



EXCLUSIVE

THE WRITE STUFF

A QUIET PASSION | Davies meets Dickinson for a sublime literary bio...

I think I'm in danger of becoming prolific!" laughs Terence Davies. After long periods of inactivity, the veteran British filmmaker behind *The Long Day Closes* and *The House Of Mirth* now has two films inside 12 months – 2015's literary adaptation *Sunset Song* and up-and-coming Emily Dickinson film, *A Quiet Passion*. "I don't question it," he adds. "I'm just glad it happened."

Davies first encountered American 19th Century poet Dickinson when he was 18, thanks to a TV documentary. "I'd never heard of her," he says. "I can still remember the first poem – 'Because I could not stop for death/He kindly stopped for me.' I went out and read her poems – and I loved them. But I was 18. I never thought I would make films about her. I was still training as an accountant!"

Thankfully, having ditched the number crunching, the early reviews for Davies' latest are sensational – the *New Yorker* calling it "one of the great movies of the time" – with praise for its deeply felt portrayal of the reclusive Dickinson. "It's really an interpretation of her life," notes Jennifer Ehle, who plays the poet's sister, Vinnie. "It's not a biopic, it's a lyrical interpretation."

When it came to casting Emily, Davies already had someone in mind:

Cynthia Nixon. He'd met the *Sex And The City* star years earlier for a project that fell apart and thought of her as he wrote the script. "We met, and we were talking about Emily Dickinson... when her mother died, she said a poem of hers ran through her mind. I thought, 'She knows the poetry and she looks like her!' I just said, 'Will you do it?' And she said, 'Yes!'"

Even then, Davies spent two years securing funding. "Cynthia could've got fed up, but she was very loyal," he says. When the shoot finally took place – including at Amherst, Massachusetts, where Dickinson lived – Davies was wowed by Nixon. "She's remarkable. I watched her become Emily." Now that's poetry in motion. **JM**

ETA | 31 MARCH / *A QUIET PASSION* OPENS NEXT MONTH.

SISTER ACT

Nixon and Jennifer Ehle as poet Emily Dickinson and her sibling Vinnie. (below) Emma Bell plays Dickinson in her youth.



Q&A
CYNTHIA NIXON

Why do you think Terence Davies picked you to play Emily Dickinson?

He saw something in me that I see in myself. I have always – particularly as a younger person – identified very strongly with Emily Dickinson. I do feel I have a lot of Emily qualities. My life is very different. I've had such a range of experience. But at root, I think Emily and I are constructed the same.

In what way?

I, like Emily, had a love-hate relationship with wanting to be paid attention to – and not wanting to have to be out in the world. Emily was an only child and I'm an only child... and we're not very good at the casual. We're good at the very intense one-on-one connection.

What got you over this?

I don't know. I just got out. Being an actor from an early age... and the power and independence that came from that, and the sense of self it gave you, was very important. I'm still weird in a lot of ways and shy in a lot of ways! I guess what I learned is... if someone says something unpleasant to me, it doesn't mean I'm going to shrivel up and fall to the floor. **JM**



THE NEXT BIG THING

ALLISON WILLIAMS

IS MUCH MORE THAN THE GIRL NEXT DOOR.

Having rocketed to stardom as uptight princess Marnie in Lena Dunham's critically acclaimed comedy drama *Girls*, Allison Williams is about to add a movie career to her list of conquests. Her first project? A racially charged horror from comedy powerhouse Jordan Peele. "I'm open to anything," she smiles. "With me, it's always a 180, because I like to keep myself on my toes."

How did you get involved in *Get Out*?

My agent told me Jordan had me in mind for Rose. I was nervous because a lot of what I'd been sent was different versions of Marnie. By the time I was done with the script I knew it had to be my first movie, because it's surprising and different, and I thought it had the potential to challenge audiences.

Could you identify with Rose?

It relates to that feeling of wanting your family to like the person you're

bringing home. The thing I couldn't relate to was the idea you're concerned with how they're going to act around that person. I've never been embarrassed of my parents, because they're so much cooler than I am!

***Get Out* is a socially conscious horror film. Did that appeal?**

Definitely. There's a legacy of movies that have promoted social issues through the lens of horror. Jordan realised how powerful it would be

to have an audience relating to the black character in this situation. I wanted to play Rose because I wanted to be involved in a movie that starts the kind of conversations I hope this movie starts.

Post-*Girls*, are movies the next step?

Yes, although after *Peter Pan Live!* you stop wondering what the next thing is going to be, because it always comes out of nowhere. There's a lot of things I want to work on, things I've bought the rights to that I want to develop. I'll wait until I see something interesting and different. And if I don't see it, I'll do it myself. Sounds easy, doesn't it? **JE**

ETA | 24 March / *Get Out* opens next month.

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EXCLUSIVE

OCCULT APPEAL

THE LOVE WITCH | Prepare to be spellbound by Anna Biller's horror melodrama...

Wowing festival audiences around the globe, *The Love Witch* presents beautiful witch Elaine (Samantha Robinson), who wants only to find true love and believes a woman should fulfil a man's every fantasy. Retrograde bullshit? Not a bit of it – Elaine creates potions to ensure men fall for her charms, but the clueless lugs invariably disappoint and wind up dead.

Anna Biller is the talent behind *The Love Witch*'s writing, directing, editing, set designs and costumes, and, glowing as the write-ups have been, she's not happy. "People say I'm pastiche-ing Russ Meyer, Jess Franco or Mario Bava, but I don't really know their work because I think so little of it," she sighs. "My influences are actually highbrow – Josef von Sternberg, Greek tragedy, Shakespeare, French Symbolist theatre – but people interpret them as lowbrow, and I'm wondering if that's to do with my gender."

She has a point. As well as subverting gender clichés and re-writing the femme fatale, *The Love Witch* is as impeccably designed as any Wes Anderson movie. And yet her films (her debut was 2007's *Viva*) are frequently pigeonholed as riffs on '70s exploitation movies. "People refuse

to think of them as art," she says. "It's not the same for Guy Maddin, Todd Haynes or Derek Jarman."

What's more, the dazzling form is all part of the content, and her movies come primarily from within. "I take the things that have affected me most deeply, and I mediate them through an art form," she explains, confessing how the guys in her life have never measured up.

"When you're having a relationship," continues Biller, "they change. He sees you as a sex symbol at first, and once he starts to take you more seriously, then he wants a servant, and often desexualises you and starts to sexualise other women. That's what the movie's about." **JG**

ETA | 10 MARCH / THE LOVE WITCH OPENS NEXT MONTH.

MAGIC FLAWS

Robinson plays the titular siren, whose sex spells don't go quite to plan.



Q&A

SAMANTHA ROBINSON

Elaine's very mysterious. Powerful, but also vulnerable...

Well, she's a witch, traditionally seen as strong and rebellious, but also she's sort of a Stepford Wife, so there's that juxtaposition within her. She's definitely mysterious; she's looking for love. Everyone can relate to that. She's just damaged, really. She's tragic, she can never get what she wants.

Were you nervous about the nude scenes?

Yes! If there had just been one scene it wouldn't have been so bad, but there were so many days where it was like, "Oh, another one where I'm naked!" But it's done in such a tasteful way.

You have some great costumes, too...

Oh, it was so much fun. Creating the look really helped me get into character. I loved the eyeshadow and the blush, it was very transformative – it's like how Elaine creates this mask for herself, to protect herself. It really has an effect on you as an actor, too. It's empowering.

How did you feel when you saw the sets?

I was floored. Anna's attention to detail is amazing. She had a lighter engraved with 'Elaine', but you never see that. **JW**

CAN WE TALK ABOUT...?

SPLIT'S BIG REVEAL

Why M. Night's latest twist is his most unexpected yet...

**SPOILER
ALERT!**

Admittedly, you go into an M. Night Shyamalan movie expecting a twist. Since his 1999 breakout hit *The Sixth Sense* had punters gasping in the aisles and endlessly quipping "I see dead people", the writer-director-producer has made rug-pulls his USP. *Split*, however, contains one of his most audacious switcheroos yet.

It was all going pretty well before that point, too. James McAvoy delivers a tour-de-force performance as the multiple personalities of Kevin, and his physical evolution into 'the beast' feels like the Shyamalan twist we were waiting for, ending the film with an adrenaline-pumped climax.

But that's not all. The closing moments show diner patrons comparing news of 'the beast' to one

Mr. Glass, *Unbreakable*'s brittle-boned big bad. There to confirm the link? Bruce Willis' David Dunn! So you weren't just watching a claustrophobic thriller; it's also an *Unbreakable* sequel/supervillain origin story. This is one of those rare twists that actually changes the genre of the film you just watched.

What's most impressive is that the twist was kept under wraps for so long, for full, whiplash-inducing effect. For

another film, this would've been the marketing campaign; here it's the unexpected payoff. At early screenings, the buzz was palpable. The film debuted at Fantastic Fest last year, to spoiler-free reactions. "The guy who was running the whole thing said, 'I'll kill any of you if you tell anyone,'" Shyamalan told us of the unofficial embargo. When we spoke to James McAvoy, he teased how "elements of [Split] that thematically bled into the *Unbreakable* world got me very, very excited," describing *Split* as "sort of an indie depiction of a supervillain".

Unbreakable, underrated upon release, is arguably Shyamalan's best-loved feature, and fans have been hungry for a sequel: a sequel they didn't realise was secretly on the way. All we need now is for Shyamalan to extend the universe even further... **MM**

'IT'S A RARE TWIST THAT ACTUALLY CHANGES THE GENRE OF THE FILM'



EXCLUSIVE

UNDER EXAMINATION

GRADUATION | Rape, realism and Romania in Cristian Mungiu's devastating new movie...

Cristian Mungiu's latest film, *Graduation*, began with a real-life incident. "There was this case I took from the press," he explains. "This girl who was attacked, raped in the middle of Bucharest. And before she was raped, she was dragged on the street for half an hour between people and nobody interfered." In Mungiu's eyes, it said a lot about modern society. "We live among people but we just care about ourselves."

With the Romanian writer-director employing the austere approach he took for his Palme d'Or-winning *4 Months, 3 Weeks And 2 Days*, *Graduation* begins as Cluj-based 18-year-old Eliza (Maria-Victoria Dragus) is sexually assaulted in broad daylight, the day before her final school exams. A star pupil, she has a scholarship offer from a British university, depending on her results. But after her attack, she's in no condition to sit any tests.

What unfolds is less about her recovery from the attack than the complex aftermath, as her surgeon-father (Adrian Titieni) begins greasing palms to give his daughter a free pass through the exam system. "You know whenever you live in a society there's a

lot of compromise and corruption," says Mungiu. "I see a lot of disappointed people," he adds. "A lot of confused people. A lot of aggression."

It's just the beginning of an increasingly murky drama that speaks about collective responsibility, depression and infidelity. One particularly wry line sees the father speak about his desire for his daughter to go to the more "civilised" England. "We work with stereotypes," says Mungiu. "Who knows how Englishmen are? I was taken by a driver in England last year... he said, 'If I were you, I wouldn't spend my holidays here!' That was my first encounter!"

The film won Mungiu the Best Director prize in Cannes last year,

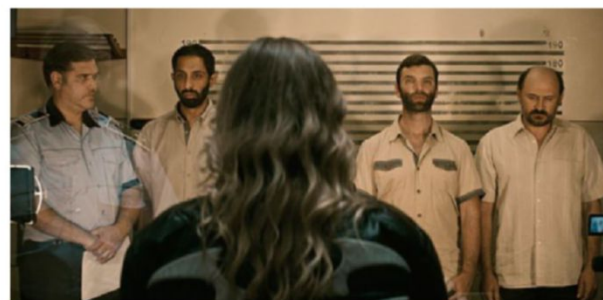
TESTING TIMES

Maria-Victoria Dragus plays the student who suffers a horrific sexual attack.

adding to his Palme d'Or and his Best Screenplay award there for 2012's *Beyond The Hills* – a remarkable record for the 48-year-old. "People [in Romania] are very proud whenever we get awards... but there's something I don't like," he says. "When people congratulate me for the awards, you ask them: 'Have you watched the film?' And they say 'Not yet!'"

Little wonder he's irked: if you're holding up a mirror to society, but no-one is looking, how can you provoke a reaction? "I try to be polemic with the films. I need to be polemic," he says. "A society prepared for this would be a society in which people are much more inclined to judge themselves a little bit more." **JM**

ETA | 17 MARCH / GRADUATION OPENS NEXT MONTH.



SHORT CUTS

The latest happenings in movieland...



NEIL BEFORE GOS

Whiplash wunderkind Damien Chazelle has settled on his first post-*La La Land* project: a biopic of the first man on the Moon, Neil Armstrong. *La La*'s leading man Ryan Gosling will step into the Moon boots of Armstrong between 1961 and 1969 for a "visceral first-person account" of the sacrifices required to survive one of mankind's most dangerous missions. *Spotlight*'s Josh Singer will pen the script based on James R. Hansen's book *First Man: The Life Of Neil A. Armstrong*.

MARRIED TO THE MOB

Steven Knight's *Eastern Promises* sequel, *Body Cross*, is finally moving ahead. Vincent Cassel and Viggo Mortensen will reprise their roles as, respectively, Russian underboss Kirill and henchman Nikolai, though screenwriter Knight is thought to be inheriting directorial duties from David Cronenberg. The sequel will again shoot in London and is, says Knight, "much better than the first".

ACADEMY RATIO

The 89th Academy Awards takes place on 26 February, with red-hot favourite *La La Land* leading the pack, tying at 14 nominations with 1997's *Titanic* and 1950's *All About Eve* for the all-time record. Talking of records, Meryl Streep will be vying for Best Actress – her 20th Academy nod – for *Florence Foster Jenkins*. President Donald Trump has yet to tweet his congratulations to the "overrated" actress.

TITLE TATTLE

Ending months of wild speculation ('Force Of Destiny', 'Tale Of The Jedi Temple?'), the bigwigs at Disney have finally unveiled the title for *Star Wars: Episode VIII* – the rather classy *The Last Jedi*. Cue more months of wild speculation, as fans ponder who exactly is the last Jedi. Luke, Rey, Kylo Ren? Just another 10 months to go before we find out...



MY MOVIE LIFE

The films that make **Richard Herring** chuckle, weep and squirm.



THE FIRST MOVIE I EVER SAW

We never went to the cinema very much but I remember seeing a James Bond double bill. One of them was definitely **DR. NO** and maybe *From Russia With Love*? Was that a Sean Connery one? It would have been early '70s so it wasn't as they were coming out, it was just that there was a double bill and I'd never seen a Bond film. I must have been about five. I have vague memories of the fight on the plane in whichever one that's in [Goldfinger, perhaps?], but I remember the excitement of going to the cinema.



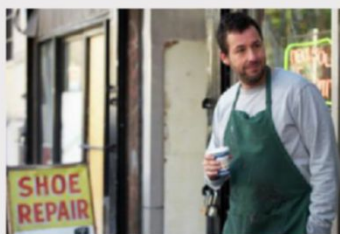
THE FILM THAT ALWAYS MAKES ME CRY

I was once watching **LOVE ACTUALLY** and it made me start crying uncontrollably, but not really to *Love Actually*. It was more about what was going on in my life. *Love Actually* sort of triggered deep despair in me. Richard Curtis is a great writer but I think you love to hate those films. I do fall for sentimentality. It's often when it's family stuff or a father-son thing, I don't particularly know why. Increasingly I've found it hard to cry at anything but there is an element of me that's soppy.



MY DESERT ISLAND FILM

I might take a film I didn't like to try and encourage me to get off the island, like **SLIDING DOORS**. I always watch that even though it infuriates me. I would enjoy being annoyed by it. I think that if I had something that I already enjoyed it might make me complacent. It might make me want to escape the island because I wouldn't want to have to watch *Sliding Doors* every day for the rest of your life unless you, say, lost three stone, then you'd probably get dieting. Maybe I'll try that.



THE FILM I LOVE THAT NOBODY'S HEARD OF

I'm going to say **THE COBBLER**. Even though other people have heard of it and I don't love it, I think people probably aren't really aware of it. It's such a high concept and weird film. Adam Sandler is a cobbler with a magic cobbling machine. He puts on the shoes of someone who he's cobbled on that machine and he turns into that person, which relies on the people having the same size feet as him. I feel like Adam Sandler realised he wouldn't have to be in it much.



THE FILM THAT SCARES ME MOST

I'm very squeamish so **THE DRILLER KILLER** was very bad for me. It seemed very extreme and I think we believed it was real at the time. Anything where people get cut I can't really watch. I don't like watching blood and stuff. I haven't seen *The Human Centipede*, which is a film I talk a lot about in my podcast, but I don't like the sound of that one. I'm too squeamish. It's got people sewn together, which I wouldn't like, even if it wasn't mouth to anus. Mouth to anus is probably the worst way to be sewn to someone.



THE FILM THAT ALWAYS MAKES ME LAUGH

SPINAL TAP. We used to watch that two or three times on every tour and all the things in it would happen to us. It's probably the most influential film on modern comedy that there is, it's just perfect the way they put it together. You spot new little details each time you watch it. I think I could watch that once a week and still enjoy it. **JF**

ETA | OUT NOW / RICHARD HERRING – THE BEST IS ON TOUR IN THE UK UNTIL MAY.

ON SET

LIFE'S A WITCH

DON'T KNOCK TWICE | A wicked Wiccan splits a mum and daughter in Caradog James' Brit-horror...

Somewhere on a backstreet industrial estate in Cardiff, stuck between a recycling centre and a go-kart track, *Teasers* has stumbled through a portal to Hell. Stooping through a black cave, banging our head on swinging cages and rusty chains, the darkness reveals body parts stacked against the walls, ominous pits of fire, and a big hairy Spanish bloke in a dressing gown pretending to be a witch.

Directed by Caradog James (*The Machine*), *Don't Knock Twice* is pitched as an indie-horror with something to say. It casts Katee Sackhoff as a messed-up single mum who abandons her only daughter (Lucy Boynton) right before an evil child-stealing she-demon throws an ancient curse into the mix.

"These aren't blondes running away. These are strong women dealing with complex issues," says James, referencing a dozen influences from '70s American cinema. "The best horrors are about relationships. [They] tap into base fears – of abandonment, of being betrayed, the fear of loss."

Catching up with the Bifa-winning director in the car park outside the meticulously made demon domain, *TF* finally sees the cast in the sunlight – Sackhoff and Boynton both having to wring blood out of their hair, Nick Moran desperate to hit the go-karting

track and Spanish witch performer Javier Botet (*REC*) showing how he can make his hands look like spiders.

"If this were a social realism piece by Mike Leigh, you'd get the mother and daughter getting ripped apart by social services, by a teacher, by an ex-boyfriend..." adds producer John Giwa-Amu. "That's all represented by our witch. Every emotional beat we have of them getting closer together, the witch rips them apart again."

"We wanted to do a movie where the audience will *really* be on the edge of their seats," says James. "We wanted them engaged. We wanted them frightened. We wanted them having fun in the cinema, but we also wanted to tell a story that was genuinely worth telling." **PB**

ETA | 31 MARCH / DON'T KNOCK TWICE OPENS NEXT MONTH.

UNDER FIRE

Sackhoff and Lucy Boynton have a whole lot more than their mother-daughter relationship to worry about, while Nick Moran (below) plays a policeman.



Q&A

KATEE SACKHOFF

Should we ask about the blood?

Yeah, sorry. I don't normally look like this. Every night we go back to the hotel covered in gore and mud and grossness. Every time I take a shower it's just a sea of brown and red at the bottom of the tray. There's this ring around the tub every morning too. The poor guy at the front desk has stopped asking now.

It sounds exhausting.

Shooting a horror film is *incredibly* exhausting. They're usually the ones you have the most fun on though because you often can't take the subject matter too seriously, but you do spend a lot of time screaming. You go home with a sore throat.

Are you a horror buff?

I'm actually not. I know that's a horrible thing to say, but I find real life scary enough! Horror is a genre that I've truly never really understood. I understand what fear is and I understand what pain is though, so it's always such an interesting thing to explore those emotions.

What drew you to *Don't Knock Twice*?

My agent called and said "read this script and then watch *The Machine*". As soon as I did, I picked up the phone. It really is an incredible story. **PB**





PICKING UP STEAM

After a few quiet years, Smith has *Yoga Hosers* and TV series *MallBrats* on the way.

all I would've done is a podcast about how much I love *Slacker*. But that didn't exist so I said, "How do I show my affection? I'll become a filmmaker." It worked out great – but I'm more suited to verbal storytelling.

You've always found great actors to work with. Is that one of your talents?

All these people existed. I just got to showcase them. [Ben] Affleck – he was acting since he was a kid. I just got to showcase him. Jason Lee was a professional skateboarder. I just got to showcase him as an actor. Harley and Lily-Rose [Depp, daughter of Johnny], the same thing. These kids were always going to do stuff. I just got them early.

Johnny Depp returns in *Yoga Hosers* as his *Tusk* detective character Guy Lapointe. How did that happen?

At the end of *Tusk*, he said, "I love this character. If you ever want me to do it again, I'll do it in a heartbeat." I said, "You don't do that – you only double up if they pay you a lot of *Pirates* [Of The Caribbean] money and stuff." He goes, "I love this, I love doing this voice and everybody in my life hates this voice so much! The only place I can do it is here. So if you ever want to do it again, I'm ready to go."

You recently directed episodes of *The Flash*, but pulled out of 2011's *The Green Hornet*. Why?

I love to watch movies like that but I never look at movies and go, "One day I'm going to get there." I had the opportunity with *The Green Hornet* but I thought it was not for me. I passed on it and made *Clerks II* instead. That's the filmmaker I am. Life changes and maybe somewhere down the road, by virtue of inflation I may wind up making an expensive movie, but I'm not really wired that way.

What can you say about *MallBrats*, the *Mallrats* TV show?

It's the story of Brodie and his daughter, so it's Harley [Quinn Smith] and Jason Lee. That for me is like... I always love doing this shit but now I get to put my kid in it. And also, it's nice that my kid doesn't suck! She's good! I can use her the way I used Jason Lee or Jason Mewes. I can write to that voice because I've grown up listening to that voice. **JM**

ETA | 13 FEBRUARY / *YOGA HOSERS* IS RELEASED ON DIGITAL THIS MONTH.

THE HERO

KEVIN SMITH

Silent Bob speaks up...

New Jersey motormouth Kevin Smith, 46, embodied the '90s US indie scene with films such as *Clerks* and *Chasing Amy*. He's now back in the convenience store with *Yoga Hosers*, the second of his 'True North' trilogy after 2014's horror-comedy *Tusk*. Starring Smith's own daughter Harley Quinn and Lily-Rose Depp as two shop-girls battling Nazi sausages, you won't have seen the like before...

With *Tusk* and now *Yoga Hosers*, are you firmly into your Midnight Movie phase?

Most people do it in reverse. They start in exploitation films, then do a little TV directing, then move onto features. You work yourself up a ladder. I made *Clerks* and suddenly I was a filmmaker. Everyone said, "You're a director!" Now I'm going backwards. I didn't get to do weird, experimental fun shit – I just made movies I could make, like *Clerks*, *Mallrats*, *Chasing Amy*, *Dogma*... I was writing about a world I'd come from.

Is that why you stopped making feature films for about three years?

Yeah... happy people don't make great art – it's that simple. Great art comes from a place of pain and I don't really

have any more pain. My life worked out unbelievably, so for a while, I struggled. I stepped away for three years. I thought, "I guess I shouldn't make movies anymore." After *Red State*, I was like, "I'll go podcast." Then, oddly, the podcast [*the SModcast*, with Scott Mosier] brought me back to movies... everything that's in *Tusk* and *Yoga Hosers* came out of episodes of that.

Do you feel like you were built for podcasting?

I love it. Honestly, if podcasting had existed when I saw *Slacker*,



SILENT SUCCESS

(Top to bottom) Dante and Randal in Smith's breakout *Clerks*; Smith with Jay and Silent Bob partner Jason Mewes in *Mallrats*; the *Yoga Hosers* cast.

'I DIDN'T GET TO DO WEIRD, FUN SHIT. I WAS WRITING ABOUT A WORLD I WAS FROM'

SOUND BYTES

Quotable dialogue from this month's movies – and their stars

“CHRIS NOLAN – WHAT A FANTASTIC DIRECTOR FOR A BOND MOVIE.”

Tom Hardy has some ideas for *Bond 25*.



60%

The percentage of *Ready Player One* filmed in mo-cap for the Oasis virtual reality sequences.



\$307 MILLION

Your Name's worldwide box office, making it the highest-grossing anime of all time.



“AS MY FRIEND, THE DEAR DEPARTED PRINCESS LEIA, SAID TO ME ONCE, ‘TAKE YOUR BROKEN HEART, MAKE IT INTO ART.’”

Meryl Streep remembers Carrie Fisher in a powerful Golden Globes speech.



“[GEORGE LUCAS] SAID, ‘I THOUGHT OF YOU AS ONE OF THE JEDI, BUT YOU’RE MUCH TOO POWERFUL FOR THE PART.’”

Brian Blessed as a Jedi? It nearly happened.



HERO OF DUNE

Director Denis Villeneuve isn't leaving sci-fi anytime soon – after *Blade Runner 2049* he'll helm an adaptation of *Dune*.



GOOD THING
BAD THING

R.I.P. WILLIAM PETER BLATTY

Novelist/screenwriter/director William Peter Blatty has died at 89. He won an Oscar for his *Exorcist* script and penned *A Shot In The Dark*.

“THE SCRIPT NEVER WAS GOOD. I COULDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY [JOEL SCHUMACHER] WANTED TO DO WHAT HE WANTED TO DO.”

Michael Keaton was right to bail on *Batman*.



“I LIKE TO FIGHT AROUND.”

Lego Batman has no supervillain loyalty.



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★★★★★ KILLS IT ★★★★★ BIG GUN ★★★★★ HIT 'N' MISS ★★★★★ OFF TARGET ★★★★★ FIRING BLANKS

BIG SCREEN

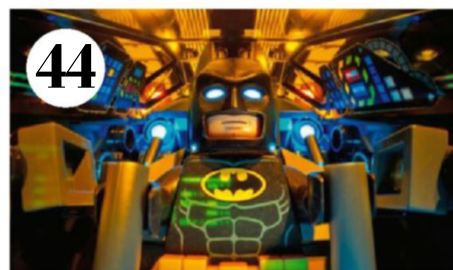
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CHAPTER 2
Keanu reloaded...

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| Tower | ★★★★ | p53 |
| T2 Trainspotting | ★★★★★ | p46 |
| xXx: Return Of Xander Cage | ★★ | p49 |

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ALSO RELEASED

We couldn't see them in time for this issue, so head to gamesradar.com/totalfilm for reviews of the following:

| TITLE | RELEASE DATE |
|----------------------|--------------|
| Bitter Harvest | 24 February |
| A Cure For Wellness | 24 February |
| Fifty Shades Darker | 10 February |
| Fist Fight | 3 March |
| The Great Wall | 17 February |
| Headshot | 3 March |
| Logan | 1 March |
| Rings | out now |
| The Space Between Us | 10 February |
| Viceroy's House | 3 March |

For more reviews visit gamesradar.com/totalfilm

CERTIFICATE TBC **DIRECTOR** Chad Stahelski **STARRING** Keanu Reeves, Ruby Rose, Ian McShane, Common, Laurence Fishburne, Riccardo Scamarcio **SCREENPLAY** Derek Kolstad **DISTRIBUTOR** Warner Bros **RUNNING TIME** 122 mins

JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2

The Rome warrior...

★★★★★ OUT 17 FEBRUARY

When *John Wick* arrived in 2014, it took everyone by surprise. Delivering a rabbit punch to the action genre's solar plexus, this sharp mix of gun-fu fight choreography and New York noir offered Keanu Reeves yet another career rebirth, just as *The Matrix* did in 1999. Directed by Chad Stahelski and David Leitch, former stunt doubles who worked with Reeves on that seminal Wachowskis-directed sci-fi, it was the sort of lean, mean actioner that had rarely been seen since John Woo's Hong Kong heyday (*The Killer*, *Hard Boiled*).

SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED...

THE KILLER (1989)

John Woo's classic tale of double-crossing assassins.

THE MATRIX (1999)

Reeves and Fishburne's first team-up was ahead of its (bullet) time.

HARDCORE HENRY 2015

First-person murder and mayhem that in no way reneges on its title.

FOR MORE REVIEWS VISIT GAMESRADAR.COM/TOTALFILM

Picking up where the first film left off, *John Wick: Chapter 2* sees Reeves' titular, black-suited hitman still on the rampage. You'll remember this retired assassin they call 'the Boogeyman' was forced to get back in the game after Russian gangsters took a fancy to his Mustang and killed his dog – given to him by his late wife Helen before her untimely demise. Quite rightly, *Chapter 2* starts mid-chase. "John Wick is a man of focus, commitment and sheer fucking will," says Peter Stormare's cigar-chomping syndicate boss, all too aware of Wick's relentless nature and remarkable skill set.

Before the opening credits, Wick has taken down Stormare's drug-smuggling goons in a warehouse, virtually turning his Mustang into scrap metal in the process. Returning to his chic modernist pad, now occupied by the chocolate pit-bull he picked up from animal rescue in the previous film's finale, Wick re-cements his cache of weapons back into the basement floor when there's a knock



Wick ponders his Rome tick-list: check out the Colosseum, drop by the Vatican, kill the entire local underworld...

at the door. Standing there is another ghost from his violent past, Santino (Riccardo Scamarcio), who gives him a so-called "marker": crime-speak for an offer he can't refuse.

DEEPER UNDERGROUND

When Wick refuses the hit, Santino brings out the big guns – quite literally, in an explosive set-piece. This being the netherworld Wick operates in, run by a strict series of codes, he has little choice but to take the job – which involves killing Santino's sister Gianna (Claudia Gerini). Turns out Santino wants her seat at the High Table, a coveted place among a group of elite crime lords bestowed to Gianna by their

father. And so, with his Mustang being repaired by John Leguizamo's returning chop-shop owner Aurelio, Wick hotfoots it to Rome.

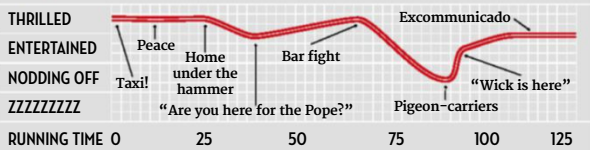
Arriving in the eternal city, Wick gets tooled up thanks to Peter Serafinowicz's classy gun-seller – and then the fun *really* starts. Forced to confront literally dozens of guards, Reeves gets to work – above ground in a plush palazzo and in the eerily lit catacombs below. But that's just the beginning of his dilemmas, as Santino turns the tables and casts Wick as an outlaw in a world of outlaws.

With Derek Kolstad back on screenwriting duties, what *JW: C2* does well is to expand on the underworld network hinted at in the original. Naturally, we return to the Continental, the swanky Manhattan hotel owned by Ian McShane's suave Winston and overseen by Lance Reddick's

'HUGELY INVENTIVE SEQUENCES PROVE THERE'S LIFE IN THE GENRE'



FILM PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE™



all-knowing concierge Charon – a sort of safe haven for hitmen and other organised crime types that doesn't permit killing on the premises.

GUNSMOKE AND MIRRORS

Here, Kolstad also shows what happens when a hit is put out on someone: tattoo-clad telephone operators take the message, sending it chuntering through old-fashioned suction tubes like something out of Terry Gilliam's *Brazil*. Likewise, we get to see more of just how deadly Wick's world is: assassins lurk on every street corner,

from violin-playing buskers to a giant sumo wrestler who puts all of Wick's specialist skills to the test.

While Leitch doesn't return as co-director, Stahelski has lost none of his knack for action. Last year's *Hardcore Henry* may have upped the brutality ante but *JW: C2* winds you with its intensity – driven by Reeves' remarkable athleticism and some wonderful choreography. A fight with Gianna's bodyguard (Common) in a subway train is just one of the hugely inventive sequences that prove there's plenty of life (and death) left in the genre yet.

There's also a wry little *Matrix* reunion between Reeves and Laurence Fishburne, with Morpheus pitching up as a pigeon-fancying overlord to a network of assassin-street-beggars. It sounds weird, and it is – though no stranger than the oddball production

design from Kevin Kavanaugh, culminating in a hall-of-mirrors modernist art exhibition called 'Reflections on the Soul' – "to lead you into deeper reflection of the nature of self".

True, *John Wick: Chapter 2* doesn't quite hit the heights of the original – partly because the element of surprise when it comes to the fight-work is gone, partly because it lacks the emotional pull of Wick avenging his wife's memory. But as badass B-movies go, this really gets the blood pumping. **James Mottram.**

THE VERDICT

Not as groundbreaking as its predecessor, but its 'more of the same' mantra will satisfy fans. Stunning fights, relentless action and a super-cool Keanu.



A double-act even funnier than Clooney and O'Donnell...

SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED..

ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT 2003-2013

Arnett and Cera first joined farces in this cult family sitcom.

PUSS IN BOOTS 2011

Another 'toon spin-off in which Galifianakis voices the villain.

THE LEGO MOVIE 2014

Arnett's Bats steals scenes in the blocky blockbuster.

FOR MORE REVIEWS VISIT GAMESRADAR.COM/TOTALFILM

THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE

Taking the rise...

★★★★★ OUT TO FEBRUARY

Just when it appeared we'd reached peak superhero, those wily folks at Warner Bros find another way to re-package the Caped Crusader and the other denizens of the DC Comics stable – one that also manages to ally them to the world's most popular toy brand. (Ker-ching!) The result is a riotous follow-up to 2014's *The Lego Movie*.

It also goes some way towards dispelling the lingering stink from last year's *Dawn Of Justice* and *Suicide Squad* disappointments, films this one has no qualms about adding to its list of satirical victims. ("Get criminals to

CERTIFICATE U **DIRECTOR** Chris McKay
STARRING Will Arnett, Zach Galifianakis
SCREENPLAY Seth Grahame-Smith, Chris McKenna, Erik Sommers **DISTRIBUTOR** Warner Bros **RUNNING TIME** 104 mins

fight criminals? That's a stupid idea!" mutters Batman at one point.)

Marvel too gets its fair share of ribbing (check out the the password required to enter the Batcave), as do the conventions of superhero movies themselves. (The film kicks off with Zach Galifianakis' Joker hijacking a plane full of munitions operated by McGuffin Airlines.) Yet the chief target is the Dark Knight himself, hilariously voiced by Will Arnett as a grumpy churl and preening egotist that helmer Chris McKay (*Robot Chicken*) delights in undercutting at every opportunity. Our hero's lonely idea of downtime, we learn, is to microwave lobster thermidor and rewatch *Jerry Maguire*.

Batman clearly needs a bat-buddy, one who duly arrives in the form of orphan Dick Grayson (Michael Cera). The Bat has bigger fish to fry, though – the Joker's latest scheme to open the Phantom Zone and have its prisoners destroy Gotham forever. How can he be a single parent when everything from Voldemort, the Gremlins and the

Creature from the Black Lagoon are dismantling his town? Well, it helps if you have manservant Alfred (Ralph Fiennes) at your side, not to mention "sick new vehicles, codenames... and a kick-ass theme tune!"

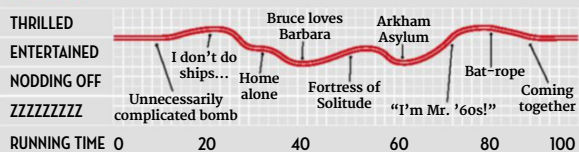
McKay's MO is to throw everything at the screen in the hope most of it sticks, be it a *Justice League* anniversary party or a homage to the Adam West TV show's habit of word-illustrating its fight scenes. But he could do all of these things without Lego, very much a spare part in a film that makes only limited use of the toy's universe-building properties. So bereft is *The Lego Batman Movie* of instant-assembly set-pieces that a scene in which a 'Scuttler' vehicle is thrown together comes as a genuine surprise.

Still, it's tough to get nit-picky with a film that finds chortles in everything from the Batmobile's lack of seat-belts to Robin's lack of trousers. Maybe DC will take the hint and inject a little more humour into their live-action fare... **Neil Smith**

THE VERDICT

An entertaining, if frenetic, vehicle for Arnett's Bale-inspired Bats that packs plenty of laughs.

FILM PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE™



Alex Hibbert and Jaden Piner as the young Chiron and Kevin in *Moonlight*'s first third.



SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED..

BOYZ N THE HOOD 1991

John Singleton's zeitgeisty drama still feels fresh a quarter-century on.

BOYHOOD 2014

Richard Linklater's coming-of-age is a time-lapse masterpiece.

HIDDEN FIGURES 2016

Why not enjoy a Mahershala Ali double-bill this month? (review p50)

FOR MORE REVIEWS VISIT GAMESRADAR.COM/TOTALFILM

MOONLIGHT

Full-beam filmmaking...

★★★★★ OUT 17 FEBRUARY

At some point, you gotta decide for yourself who you want to be," says drug dealer Juan (Mahershala Ali) to Chiron, a 10-year-old boy living in Miami with no father and a crack-dependent mother (Naomie Harris). From this brief description, Barry Jenkins' film might sound like every other 'hood movie. But little about this story of identity, sexuality, class and race is run-of-the-mill.

Charting three distinct chapters in the life of Chiron, spanning roughly 16 years, *Moonlight* is almost impossible to categorise beyond its loose 'coming-of-age' tropes. Touching on issues of bullying, addiction and, above all, sexual confusion and repression, it's a superbly crafted piece of work that frequently takes a sledgehammer

CERTIFICATE 15 **DIRECTOR** Barry Jenkins **STARRING** Trevante Rhodes, Mahershala Ali, Alex Hibbert, Naomie Harris. **SCREENPLAY** Barry Jenkins **DISTRIBUTOR** Altitude Film Distribution **RUNNING TIME** 111 mins

to the stereotypes too easily associated with African-American cinema.

Inspired by Tarell Alvin McCraney's theatre piece *In Moonlight Black Boys Look Blue*, Jenkins uses different actors to play Chiron and his friend Kevin in the trio of chapters (dubbed 'Little', 'Chiron' and 'Black', after the various names our hero's known by). We begin with Little (Alex Hibbert), who's near-silent for the first 10 minutes after Juan discovers him in a crack den.

Lacking a father figure, Little's friendship with Juan and his girlfriend Teresa (Janelle Monáe) grows – a bond complicated by the fact Juan sells drugs to Little's mother. Already questions are forming in Little's mind about his sexuality – something that becomes ever-more clouded when the film jumps six years. Chiron (Ashton Sanders) is now at high school and has feelings for Kevin (Jharrel Jerome), an inveterate womaniser.

Finally, when we see Chiron in his mid-20s – now played by Trevante Rhodes – his life has changed

dramatically. To say how would spoil the surprise, beyond the fact he goes by the name 'Black' and is living in Atlanta. Rhodes adeptly conveys the emotional turmoil his character is in; André Holland, who plays Kevin – now a short-order cook – is also an admirable foil.

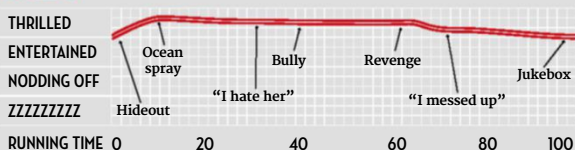
Across all three segments, Naomie Harris is marvellous as Chiron's mother, Paula, whose gradual descent into crack dependency – mirrored by their family home's decline into a hovel – is brilliantly essayed. But it's the craft of *Moonlight* that lingers: the terrific sound design, for example, that reflects Paula's fractured mental state, or the dreamy cinematography as Chiron spends a night under Miami's palms.

With a classical score by Nicholas Britell – another fine against-the-grain choice – *Moonlight* keeps surprising. The final reel isn't quite as impactful as you'd hope, but it's a hugely impressive work – one that's won the Golden Globe for Best Drama – and will be long remembered. **Rob James**

THE VERDICT

Sensitive, subtle and heartfelt, Jenkins' genre-buster is a significant work that will knock you out.

FILM PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE™



CERTIFICATE 18 **DIRECTOR** Danny Boyle **STARRING** Ewan McGregor, Robert Carlyle, Jonny Lee Miller, Ewen Bremner, Anjela Nedyalkova **SCREENPLAY** John Hodge
DISTRIBUTOR Sony **RUNNING TIME** 117 mins

T2 TRAINSPOTTING

The boys are back in town...

★★★★★ OUT NOW

On paper, it looks like a scam. The sort of take-the-money-and-run job Renton (Ewan MacGregor) pulled at the end of Danny Boyle's 1996 era-defining masterpiece. Get the gang – director Boyle, novelist Irvine Welsh, screenwriter John Hodge, producer Andrew Macdonald and a cast now more used to Hollywood than Holyrood – back together; loosely adapt another of Irvine Welsh's junk epics (this time, *Porno*), and retire on the attendant millions. Or maybe not.

SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED...

TRAINSPOTTING 1996

Iggy Pop, Dale Winton and The Worst Toilet In Scotland = Brit classic.

HUMAN TRAFFIC 1999

Warmest and wittiest of the post-*Trainspotting* Brit flicks. Nice one bruv!

24 HOUR PARTY PEOPLE 2002

Madchester's musical history becomes a brilliantly meta comedy.

FOR MORE REVIEWS VISIT GAMESRADAR.COM/TOTALFILM

For 20 years, *T2* was the elephant in the room, the gang perhaps mindful of Sick Boy's dictum: "You've got it, and then you lose it, and it's gone forever." But Boyle, for one, has never lost it, and every frame of this film means something to him, and those who were there the first time. Dizzily meta, maddeningly broad, then oddly moving, *T2* takes some getting your head round, even for the faithful.

It begins, of course, with Renton's sprinting feet. But they're pounding a treadmill, rather than Princes Street, and he can't outrun the treachery of his past. A health scare – and worse – drags him back to a Leith of steep decline and slow regeneration. Here, Sick Boy (Jonny Lee Miller) pimps out his girlfriend Veronika (Anjela Nedyalkova); Begbie (Robert Carlyle) is taking the messy route out of prison; and Spud (Ewen Bremner) is still a junkie with the soul of a poet.

"You're a tourist in your own youth," Sick Boy tells Renton, after a much-deserved beating. "What other moments will you be revisiting?" As Renton, Sick Boy and Veronika cook up a new get-rich-quick scheme, the short answer is, practically all of them. Some

are glorious – Spud freefalling into his old friend's arms. Some disappoint – the 'Choose Life' speech needs no dissection. Some – such as when one character quotes Welsh's original novel and another acts it out – are so postmodern they pull you, thrillingly, down the wormhole to Malkovich-land.

Once more, Boyle's direction is the star here. Busy with verbs, spiky with life, the film fizzles along to a fantastic soundtrack. But it's also slightly diffuse: without Renton's acid voiceover, the narrative loses that monomaniacal focus, swapping the purity of the original high for a cocktail of different uppers and downers.

With Renton at the centre, everyone else was a (brilliantly realised) bit-part player in his story – the way we all feel when we're young. With all four leads jostling for that centre, Renton becomes the everyman he always threatened to be. However, when he's singing with Sick Boy (no really) and sprinting with Spud – or from Begbie – the film crackles with the old black magic. And of its many surprises, it saves the best for last. The neon-drenched final reckoning is heart-stopping; the final shot, heart-melting.

Trainspotting, you see, was never about the drugs, or the money. It was about youth, about escape. Twenty years on, with middle age encroaching and all hopes of escape long evaporated, *T2* isn't about the drugs, or the money either. It's about chasing the old highs, realising you can't reach them and then, if you're lucky, finding new ones. **Matt Glasby**

THE VERDICT

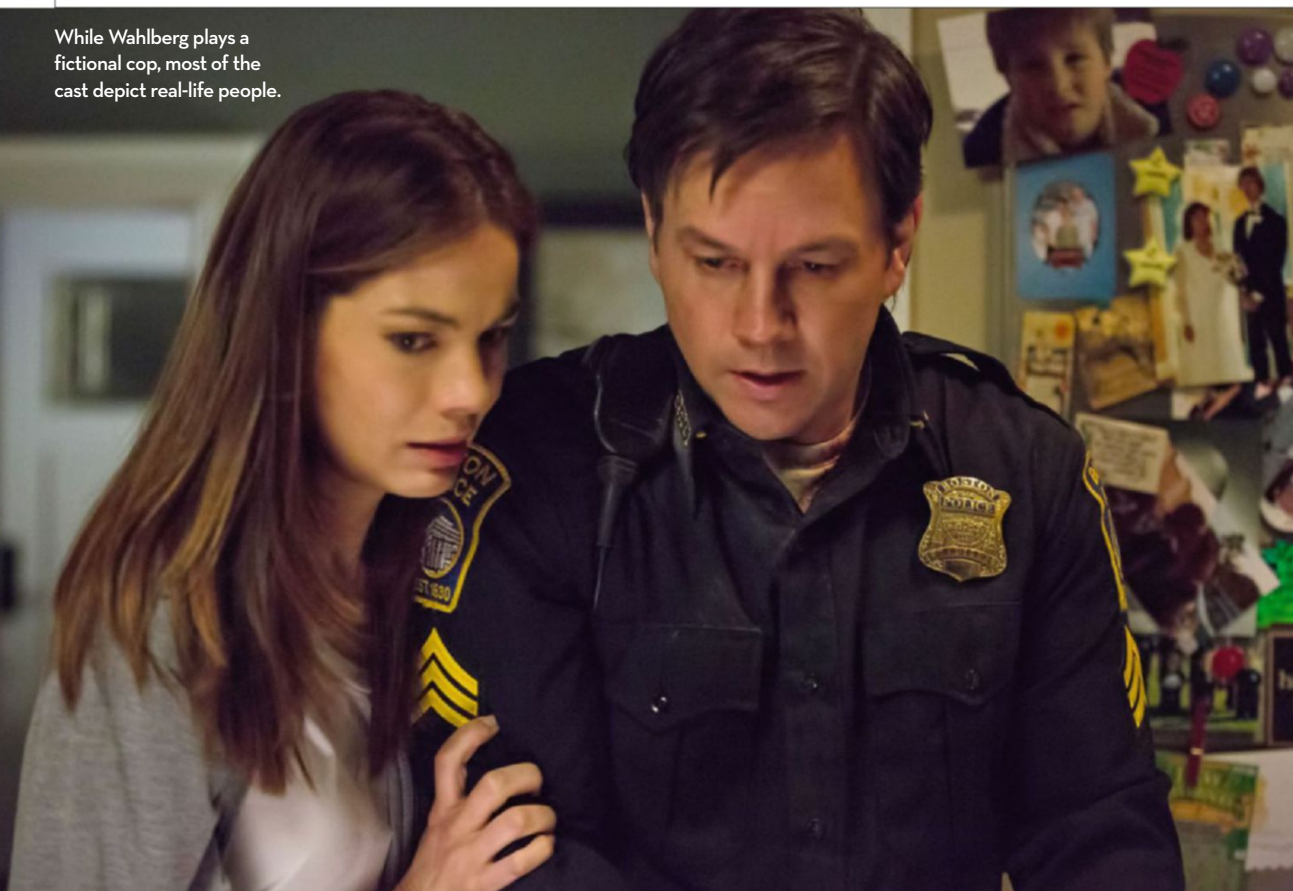
Wiser, sadder but still very much alive and kicking, *T2* is a film that knows you can't compete with the ghosts of the past. But at least you can dance with them.

Begbie still has a few issues with personal space.





While Wahlberg plays a fictional cop, most of the cast depict real-life people.



SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED..

OMAGH 2004

A heartrending look at the Troubles' single-worst atrocity.

UNITED 93 2006

Passengers fight back in Paul Greengrass' hijack drama.

THE KINGDOM 2007

US agents face terrorism in Saudi in Peter Berg's thriller.

FOR MORE REVIEWS VISIT
GAMESRADAR.COM/TOTALFILM

PATRIOTS DAY

From marathon to manhunt...

★★★★☆ OUT 23 FEBRUARY

Mark Wahlberg and Peter Berg have carved out a niche as re-constructors of real-life disasters, from a Navy Seal op in 2014's *Lone Survivor* to the BP oil spill in last year's *Deepwater Horizon*. *Patriots Day* ups the ante by dramatising the terrorist attack on the 2013 Boston Marathon and the manhunt that followed. The result is a tense slice of fiction that nonetheless raises questions about how, and indeed if, events like these should be presented on screen.

Like *Deepwater*, *Patriots* begins with breakfast. Not just in the home of Tommy Saunders (Wahlberg), a Boston cop tasked with managing crowds at the finish line, but also Tamerlan Tsarnaev (Themo Melikidze) and his brother Dzhokhar (Alex Wolff), Chechen-born siblings who are

CERTIFICATE 15 **DIRECTOR** Peter Berg
STARRING Mark Wahlberg, Kevin Bacon, John Goodman, J.K. Simmons, Michelle Monaghan **SCREENPLAY** Peter Berg, Matt Cook, Joshua Zetumer **DISTRIBUTOR** Lionsgate **RUNNING TIME** 133 mins

heading to the race with a far darker purpose. We also meet a pair of newlyweds, a security guard and a cop from the suburbs (J.K. Simmons) who all have a part to play in the imminent tragedy – one that, when it comes, is staged with a visceral immediacy and harrowing precision that leaves us rightly shaken and appalled.

Establishing a command centre at a vast and vacant cruise-ship terminal, the FBI – led by a no-nonsense Kevin Bacon – sets about analysing evidence and identifying the perpetrators. The trail leads them swiftly to the Tsarnaevs, whose attempts to elude capture take up the rest of the film in a fashion not dissimilar to Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*. It also introduces an unexpected hero: one Dun Meng (Jimmy O. Yang), a Chinese student who, having had his Merc jacked by the desperate duo, somehow contrives to escape and alert the authorities.

It's a brilliantly taut episode, matched by another scene in which Tamerlan's American wife (Melissa

Benoist) is mercilessly grilled by a female interrogator. Another stand-out set-piece is the chaotic confrontation on Simmons' patch that sees pressure-cooker bombs tossed about like firecrackers.

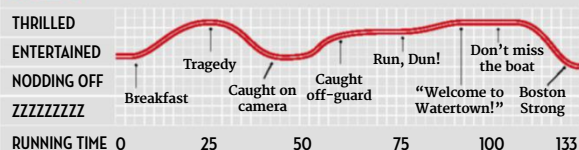
It's hard to miss, however, how few of these moments feature Wahlberg, for all of the script's efforts to incorporate his composite character into the action. It's as if the film knows that Tommy is a fiction, encouraging us to yell "bogus!" when he uses his encyclopaedic CCTV knowledge to assist Bacon's investigation or miraculously happens to be in the right place at the right time when one of the bombers finds himself cornered.

Berg's intention is to show how communities come together in the face of atrocities that are both horribly inevitable and largely unpreventable. But *Patriots Day* also proves something else: that the requirements of a star-led Hollywood vehicle are antithetical to those of factual recreations with multiple spheres of activity. **Neil Smith**

THE VERDICT

A senseless outrage is handled with sensitivity in a stirring film that doesn't need an A-list hero.

FILM PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE™





The stories are short, but Lily Gladstone still finds time to horse around.

CERTIFICATE 12A **DIRECTOR** Kelly Reichardt **STARRING** Laura Dern, Michelle Williams, Kristen Stewart, Lily Gladstone **SCREENPLAY** Kelly Reichardt **DISTRIBUTOR** Park Circus **RUNNING TIME** 107 mins

CERTAIN WOMEN

Short stories that go a long way...

★★★★☆ OUT 3 MARCH

After inching in the vague direction of the mainstream with the low-key genre thrills of *Night Moves*, Kelly Reichardt here makes her most delicate film to date, adapting a trio of stories by Maile Meloy into a graceful snapshot of the everyday lives of three Montana women.

Small-town lawyer Laura (Laura Dern) pursues an injury claim for construction worker Fuller (Jared Harris); Gina (Michelle Williams) goes on a camping weekend with her husband (James Le Gros) and moody teenage daughter (Sara Rodier); and a Native American credited only as The Rancher (Lily Gladstone) seeks a connection with Beth (Kristen Stewart), a young law tutor. Between them the tales involve a hostage situation, infidelity and thwarted romance, but the drama is muffled and melancholy, and all the richer for it.

Just as Reichardt eschews Hollywood pyrotechnics, so she refuses to amplify thrills and underline connections by hopping between the tales, cutting and colliding. Events unfurl at their own pace, favouring texture over titillation, and the lived-in performances resonate long after the credits roll. *Certain Women* won't challenge *Transformers 5* at the box office, but it's a deeply affecting triumph. **Jamie Graham**

THE VERDICT

Kelly Reichardt's discerning, awards-laden drama plays things quiet but is one to shout about.



RULES DON'T APPLY

★★★★☆ OUT 10 MARCH

Warren Beatty's passion project about Hollywood billionaire Howard Hughes is more snapshot than biopic. For one thing, Hughes (Beatty) is a supporting player in a sleek but scrambled '50s romcom following the cute but flimsy romance between newbie actress (Lily Collins) and her ambitious driver (Alden Ehrenreich). Beatty's fine, but this is no *Hail, Caesar!* **Kate Stables**



XXX: RETURN OF XANDER CAGE

★★★★☆ OUT NOW

Vin Diesel is back as the eponymous extreme sports super-spy in an unnecessary threequel. His mission: to retrieve a technological mega-macguffin. His team: a group of snipers, sexy tech geeks, stuntmen and DJs. It's even stupider than this synopsis sounds, with action that makes the F&F movies look grounded. Donnie Yen doing his thing proves the sole saving grace. **Jordan Farley**



DANCER

★★★★☆ OUT 10 MARCH

Ukrainian dancer Sergei Polunin – “the bad boy of ballet” – takes centre stage for this colourful docu-portrait. Director Steven Cantor probes beyond the party-animal antics, offering a pathos-heavy portrait of Polunin's family, who made huge sacrifices to support him. Characterised by a stunning David LaChapelle-directed dance, it's a powerful study of the pain of self-expression. **James Mottram**



LOST IN FRANCE

★★★★☆ OUT 17 FEBRUARY

Doc centred on the '90s salad days of Scotland's indie-music scene, engineered by cult record label Chemikal Underground. The music, from the likes of Mogwai and The Delgados, is great, but the film is too content to revel in nostalgia. What's missing is a discussion of what the label's subsequent decline says about the modern state of the music industry. Likeable, but low-stakes. **Stephen Puddicombe**

They had really big blackboards in the '60s...



CERTIFICATE PG **DIRECTOR** Theodore Melfi **STARRING** Taraji P. Henson, Octavia Spencer **SCREENPLAY** Allison Schroeder, Theodore Melfi **DISTRIBUTOR** 20th Century Fox **RUNNING TIME** 127 mins

HIDDEN FIGURES

They do the math...

★★★★★ OUT 17 FEBRUARY

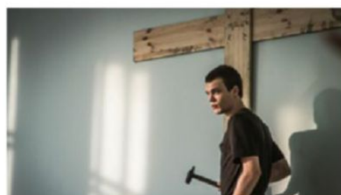
A warm helping of family-friendly feelgood history, this well-played, empowering drama celebrates African-American maths whizzes Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan and Mary Jackson's true-life contributions to the US space programme.

Employed as lowly 'computers', hand-checking calculations in 1961's race-segregated NASA, all three friends battle to join the all-white team that's racing to beat the Russians into space. Taraji P. Henson's dignified Katherine struggles with a bristling boss (Kevin Costner), hostile colleagues and ingrained racism to put her analytical geometry skills towards John Glenn's 1962 Earth orbit. Friend Dorothy (tenacious Octavia Spencer) wants to programme the men-only IBM computer that baffles NASA eggheads. And Mary (a rebellious Janelle Monáe) can't get on whites-only engineering courses without taking on local courts.

Uplifting but not schmaltzy, Theodore Melfi's (*St. Vincent*) film is no maths-laden oppression tale. The pacey script is as slickly engineered as a Mercury rocket to include girl-power fun, romance and against-the-clock launchpad crises. Its sleekly recreated '60s is wrapped in Pharrell Williams tunes, plus a side helping of redneck comedy cops: "We gotta get a man into space before them damn Commies do!" **Kate Stables**

THE VERDICT

Taraji P. Henson excels in a heart-warming history lesson that proves not only rocket men had *The Right Stuff*.



THE STUDENT

★★★★★ OUT 3 MARCH

The cosy alliance between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Putin regime inspires Kirill Serebrennikov's disturbing parable, with student Veniamin (Pyotr Skvortsov) acting as a stern moral arbiter even the local priest is intimidated by. Skvortsov gives a scarily grim-faced performance, with biology teacher Elena (Viktoriya Isakova) increasingly beleaguered as the only one resisting him. **Philip Kemp**



THE LOVE WITCH

★★★★★ OUT 10 MARCH

This note-perfect homage to '70s occult pulp combines sly satire with a sharp horror edge. Samantha Robinson mesmerises as Elaine, a witchy, seductive sociopath whose potion-toting, spell-casting search for love takes deadly turns that get townsfolk running scared. Writer/director Anna Biller never lets deadpan fun drop into crude spoofing. Prepare to be bewitched, bothered and bewildered. **Kate Stables**



MULTIPLE MANIACS

★★★★★ OUT 17 FEBRUARY

John Waters' first feature talkie sees Divine heading up a travelling Cavalcade of Perversions, shocking punters with "acts against God and nature" before robbing them. Then she tries to murder her cheating boyfriend... Shot for \$5,000, this '70s black-and-white curio was the "trainer wheels" for Waters' shockfest *Pink Flamingos*. Warning: features assault by giant lobster. **Jamie Graham**



IT'S ONLY THE END OF THE WORLD

★★★★★ OUT 24 FEBRUARY

A crème de la crème cast (Marion Cotillard, Vincent Cassel and Léa Seydoux) fuels Xavier Dolan's (*Mommy*) Cannes Grand Prix winner. But like the awkward family reunion they gather for, nobody comes out well. It's shot mostly in claustrophobic close-up, given the usually good actors nowhere to hide over 97 relentless minutes of spittle-soaked squabbling. **Simon Kinnear**



LOVE OF MY LIFE

★★★★☆ OUT 17 FEBRUARY

Taking its cue from the blasé attitude of protagonist Grace (Anna Chancellor) on learning she may have only five days to live, this comedy-drama elicits chortles aplenty with its gently caustic humour despite the dark subject matter. Events spiral when Grace's ex-husband Richard (John Hannah) appears, making her wonder; is he, or current husband (James Fleet), the love of her life? **Stephen Puddicombe**



SWEET DREAMS

★★★★☆ OUT 24 FEBRUARY

Middle-aged journalist Massimo (Valerio Mastandrea) remains deeply troubled by the mysterious death of his mother when he was aged just nine. Shifting between Massimo's sepia-toned '60s childhood and his '90s adulthood, this sentimental drama comes undone via the redemptive romance between its emotionally introverted protagonist and Bérénice Bejo's compassionate female doctor. **Tom Dawson**



TRESPASS AGAINST US

★★★★☆ OUT 3 MARCH

Michael Fassbender stars in this fitful character study/crime yarn set in a traveller community. Chad (Fassbender) and dad Colby (Brendan Gleason) come to blows with cops, locals and each other in a story that strives for authenticity but never binds into anything meaningful. Still, there's Fassbender's charisma, an unhinged Sean Harris and Tom Rowland music. **James Mottram**



TAXI DRIVER

★★★★★ OUT 10 FEBRUARY

Watch this 4K restoration of Scorsese's '76 masterpiece, its colours a seeping virus, and marvel that he originally planned to shoot on black-and-white video. It's a spiritual film, tracking Robert De Niro's 'Nam vet as he takes the wrong path towards cleaning New York's streets, minds and souls. In Scorsese's words, it's "a cross between Gothic horror and the New York Daily News". **Jamie Graham**

CERTIFICATE 15 **DIRECTOR** Alice Lowe **STARRING** Alice Lowe, Gemma Whelan, Kate Dickie, Jo Hartley **SCREENPLAY** Alice Lowe
DISTRIBUTOR Kaleidoscope **RUNNING TIME** 87 mins

PREVENGE

Look who's slaughtering...

★★★★☆ OUT 10 FEBRUARY

In Ben Wheatley's satire *Sightseers*, co-writer/star Alice Lowe helped bring out the homicidal underside of British holidays. In *Prevenge*, she subverts platitudes just as eagerly, with a darkly comic zest that's all her own. Writing, directing and starring while pregnant, Lowe's delivered a bouncing bundle of prenatal splatter-core joy: a mothers 'n' horror (à la *Goodnight Mommy*, *The Babadook*) genre twist with its own cruelly funny flavour.

Lowe makes blithely riotous work of Ruth, a mum-to-be nursing bilious feelings towards both slimy men and pregnancy clichés. "Baby knows best," pipes Jo Hartley's midwife. But baby wants blood: and the little devil soon goads Ruth towards gutting the sleazy, the patronising and the "hipster sop" alike.

If the plotting is more scattershot than a newborn's bowels, that only suits the sense of transgressive abandon in Ruth's no-nonsense takedowns. She doesn't hold back: DJ Dan's (Tom Davis) comeuppance is a right mess and Kate Dickie's frosty businesswoman learns what "harsh cuts" really mean. Subtexts about grief and revenge help anchor the plot, though the more decisive clincher is Lowe's guiding imprint – a mix of scathing vernacular wit and genre savvy. Her sardonic offspring inside won't be ignored: and nor should Lowe's wickedly subversive voice. **Kevin Harley**

THE VERDICT

Horror's maternity ward births a treat. The story's sketchy, but satire's alive and the ending's a scream.



Bringing new meaning to the term 'funny tummy'...



Isabelle Huppert gives a fearless performance.

SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED..

BETTY BLUE (1986)

Based, like *Elle*, on a novel by French scribe Philippe Djian.

BASIC INSTINCT 1992

Verhoeven's biggest hit: sex, violence and lots of controversy.

THE PIANO TEACHER 2001

Huppert's scarily enigmatic in Michael Haneke's dark psychological drama.

FOR MORE REVIEWS VISIT
GAMESRADAR.COM/TOTALFILM

ELLE

An Huppert class act...

★★★★★ OUT TO MARCH

Paul Verhoeven's double-Golden Globe winner – his first feature in 10 years – starts with a rape. Just the sounds of an assault over a dark screen: cries, blows, the smashing of glass and crockery. The first image we see is the face of a handsome dark-grey cat, watching impassively. Then we see Michèle (Isabelle Huppert), prone and half-exposed on the floor of her sitting room, and a man all in black wearing a ski-mask.

Once her attacker is gone, however, she doesn't weep or call the police. She sweeps up the debris, takes a bath – and calmly phones for a takeaway.

Michèle, in short, may have been attacked, but she's no victim. Anything but. She makes no attempt to curry sympathy – ours or anyone else's.

CERTIFICATE 18 **DIRECTOR** Paul Verhoeven
STARRING Isabelle Huppert, Laurent Lafitte, Anne Consigny, Charles Berling, Christian Berkel, Jonas Bloquet **SCREENPLAY** David Birke, Harold Manning **DISTRIBUTOR** Picturehouse **RUNNING TIME** 131 mins

The videogame company she runs with her close friend Anna (Anne Consigny) features princesses being penetrated by multi-tentacled trolls; when an employee accuses her of being too "literary" she retorts, "Maybe we're two bitches who just got lucky." At a dinner party, her much-facelifted mother announces her plan to marry her toyboy; Michèle waits for the polite congratulations to die down, then asks, "How do you manage to be so grotesque?" In between rapes – yes, there are several – she's pursuing a loveless affair with Anna's husband Robert. Finally coming clean to her friend, she matter-of-factly explains, "I needed to get laid."

This is not, Verhoeven has insisted, "A rape comedy... There's rape and there is comedy." There is indeed, often of the blackest kind: witness the scenes between Michèle's hopeless lunkhead of a son (Jonas Bloquet) and his awful girlfriend (Alice Isaaz). But equally there are moments of sly social satire – as when, at the start of that

sophisticated Parisian dinner party, a devout guest asks if she might say grace. The reactions of her fellow guests, a mix of embarrassment and scorn, are a delight to watch.

As you'll have gathered, *Elle* is no conventional rape-revenge thriller. Even after Michèle discovers who her rapist is – and you won't have much trouble guessing – the relationship continues, growing ever more tortuous. We get a hint of an explanation for her emotional dysfunction when we learn about the horrific crimes committed by her father when she was a child. But here again the film doesn't invite pity, and nor does Huppert.

It's hard to think of another actress who could have played the role so fearlessly, and it seems Verhoeven initially planned to make this an American film, but could find no US actress who'd dare consider the role. It's no loss. Not only is *Elle* among Verhoeven's best films, it enshrines one of the finest performances Isabelle Huppert has yet given. And that really is saying something. **Philip Kemp**

THE VERDICT

A complex film that sidesteps every cliché. Paul Verhoeven and Isabelle Huppert are at the top of their game.

FILM PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE™





They're yet to master looking natural for the camera...

CERTIFICATE 15 **DIRECTOR** Mike Mills **STARRING** Annette Bening, Greta Gerwig, Elle Fanning, Billy Crudup **SCREENPLAY** Mike Mills **DISTRIBUTOR** eOne **RUNNING TIME** 118 mins

20TH CENTURY WOMEN

Mum's the word...

★★★★☆ OUT 10 FEBRUARY

Short on plot, but long on heart, Mike Mills' well-crafted coming-of-age tale is a tender, semi-autobiographical love letter to his late mother, making a matching pair with *Beginners* (2010), his deft fictional portrait of his gay father's coming out.

Mills is gifted with a blazingly smart and feisty turn from Annette Bening as doughty older single mum Dorothea, who enlists punky artist lodger Abbie (Greta Gerwig) and wild-child schoolgirl Julie (Elle Fanning) to help her troubled teenager Jamie (Lucas Jade Zumann) become a man.

Part of the film's charm lies in its note-perfect recreation of '70s California, at the tail-end of the hippie era. But its warmth comes from its uniformly nuanced performances, especially Gerwig's wounded intensity, and Fanning's fear beneath the bad-girl bravado. If the dialogue's a tad glib ("Wondering if you're happy is just a shortcut to being depressed"), the characterisation is deep, with Mills' trademark mixed-media collages of stills, archive footage and book extracts building detailed portraits. Undercutting all this playfulness is Zumann (*Sinister 2*), whose fed-up 15-year-old hero brings a shot of shrugging, *Boyhood*-style normality to the proceedings. **Kate Stables**

THE VERDICT

Acting honours go to Bening, but it's Mills' wit and originality that make this story-lite dramedy shine.



BEST

★★★★☆ OUT 24 FEBRUARY

Richard Gordon's compelling doc charts the rise and fall of '70s soccer superstar George Best, who quit in his twenties owing to the pressures of fame and a drink problem that would eventually take a tragic toll. Blending archive footage, candid interviews with colleagues and narration from the late Best himself, the film reminds us of his genius, without sugar-coating his self-destructive tendencies. **Tom Dawson**



THE BYE BYE MAN

★★★★☆ OUT NOW

This stab at a new dream-themed slasher series à la *Nightmare On Elm Street* is enthusiastic enough, but has two fatal flaws. First, who could be afraid of someone called the Bye Bye Man? Second, though the titular baddie does cut an imposing, cadaverous figure, he's joined by a flayed-dog sidekick that looks exactly like a CG pizza from 1994. It probably doesn't help that it's completely scare-free. **Ken McIntyre**



TOWER

★★★★☆ OUT NOW

In August 1966, a lone sniper atop the University of Texas' Austin Tower embarked on a 90-minute shooting spree that left 16 people dead. Using archive footage, talking heads and rotoscoped reconstructions, Keith Maitland's harrowing doc offers a minute-by-minute chronicle of how the day unfolded. Less persuasive are its attempts to paint this incident as the first tragic flowering of a societal malaise. **Neil Smith**



LOVETRUE

★★★★☆ OUT 10 FEBRUARY

Exec-produced by Shia LaBeouf, Alma Har'el's (*Bombay Beach*) poetic doc explores different forms of true love. We follow three relationships in exceptional circumstances, the most engaging of which involves Alaskan stripper Blake, who laments the lack of physical intimacy caused by her boyfriend's rare bone disease. Blurring art and life boundaries, this is playful, thoughtful and beautiful. **Matt Looker**



Washington and Davis both reprise their Tony-winning roles.

SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED..

THE GREAT DEBATERS 2007

Eloquence trumps prejudice in Washington's second film as director.

DOUBT 2008

Viola Davis excels in another stage-to-screen adap.

AUGUST OSAGE COUNTY 2013

Star-studded family friction in another adap of a Pulitzer-winning play.

FOR MORE REVIEWS VISIT GAMESRADAR.COM/TOTALFILM

FENCES

Denzel goes post-al...

★★★★★ OUT 10 FEBRUARY

Three decades on from its Broadway premiere, August Wilson's Pulitzer-winning play finally arrives on the big screen with its two leads – Denzel Washington and Viola Davis – reprising their Tony-grabbing performances from a 2010 revival that was one of New York's hottest tickets. Small wonder the film, which Washington also directs, exudes brio and authority, most of it emanating from the actor's powerhouse portrayal of a garbage collector in 1950s Pittsburgh who takes out his frustrations on his family.

Garrulous, grandiloquent and fond of his gin, Troy Maxson was once a baseball player in the so-called Negro leagues that briefly flourished between the wars. But his career never took off, leaving him angry, resentful and only too ready to crush his son's own

CERTIFICATE 12A **DIRECTOR** Denzel Washington **STARRING** Denzel Washington, Viola Davis, Jovan Adepo, Russell Hornsby, Mykelti Williamson **SCREENPLAY** August Wilson **DISTRIBUTOR** Paramount **RUNNING TIME** 139 mins

hopes of a career in sports. He has, laughs friend and co-worker Bono (Stephen Henderson), "More stories than the devil got sinners." But he also has a secret: a marital betrayal that, when disclosed, threatens to destroy the slender equilibrium between him and long-suffering wife Rose (Davis).

Washington has some great scenes in *Fences*. There's the moment when he takes youngest son Cory (Jovan Adepo) to task, answering his accusations of parental neglect with a cutting, "Who says I got to like you?" Then there's the scene where he upbraids "Mr. Death" during a lightning storm, furiously scolding the Grim Reaper for daring to take away a loved one.

Yet there's nothing here to match Davis' reaction to discovering Troy's adultery, a howl of rage that brings the movie to a shattering emotional crescendo. The problem is that it comes two-thirds of the way in, delivering a knock-out punch when there are still some rounds to go.

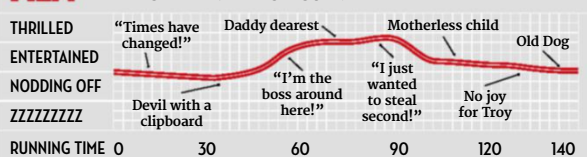
Equally problematic is Troy's brother Gabriel (Mykelti Williamson), a brain-damaged former soldier whose habit of wandering in and out of the story to deliver savant-ish words of wisdom continually reminds us this is a product of the stage. The same might be said of Washington's reluctance to move the action away from Troy's house and the cramped yard behind it: a sign of deference to the play's late creator that contrasts strikingly with his assuredness in front of the camera.

Yet as a record of what may have been its definitive theatrical treatment, *Fences* is tough to fault. And it's heartening to find a cinematic release so celebratory of the spoken word, especially at a time when bombastic effects and splashy visuals are so much to the fore. At one point, Troy tells Cory that he's "got to take the crooked with the straights". Audience members should heed that advice and accept there's a lot of meandering en route to *Fences'* powerfully memorable flashpoints. **Neil Smith**

THE VERDICT

Denzel Washington and Viola Davis excel in a well-crafted drama that's sure to bring the late August Wilson's words to a much wider audience.

FILM PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE™





Keaton's Kroc relishes cutting out the middle men...

CERTIFICATE 12A **DIRECTOR** John Lee Hancock **STARRING** Michael Keaton, Nick Offerman, John Carroll Lynch **SCREENPLAY** Robert D. Siegel **DISTRIBUTOR** Studiocanal **RUNNING TIME** 115 mins

THE FOUNDER

Not lovin' it...

★★★★☆ OUT 17 FEBRUARY

Its title oozing more irony than a Big Mac spews gloopy sauce, John Lee Hancock's finely acted portrait of the McDonald's empire's huckster-in-chief needs more vinegar on its fries.

Played by Michael Keaton with a perfectly pitched mix of live-wire charm and snake-oil smarm, Ray Kroc didn't 'found' Maccy D's. A struggling but persistent salesman, Kroc simply wondered why two California brothers wanted to buy his multi-mixers. When he visits Dick (Nick Offerman) and Mac (John Carroll Lynch) McDonald's folksy but super-efficient, super-popular burger joint, Kroc spawns a "whizz-bang" idea that Hollywood would be proud of: franchise that shit. The McDonalds concur, only to eventually lose their baby in the dance with Keaton's corporate devil.

A satire of capitalist can-do thinking lurks in *The Wrestler*/ *Turbo* writer Robert D. Siegel's script, yet Hancock (*Saving Mr. Banks*) lacks the stomach to do full justice to its vision of the American dream plummeting into a nightmare. Hancock seems happiest in the sun-dappled scenes of burger-scoffing families that mirror Kroc's bogus vision. Later, the vision curdles without darkening enough. Like a Happy Meal, *The Founder* doesn't fully satisfy. **Kevin Harley**

THE VERDICT

Keaton sells the crap out of Kroc's filet-o-fishy business, but sauce overrides substance: it needed tougher meat.



BILLY LYNN'S LONG HALFTIME WALK

★★★★☆ OUT 10 FEBRUARY

Returning a hero after a YouTube'd Iraqi firefight, Billy (Joe Alwyn) and his comrades reluctantly participate in a half-time show at a Thanksgiving football game. With its 120 frames per second, Ang Lee's latest is an eye-popping spectacle. Shame its war-is-hell platitudes are as unconvincing as the Destiny's Child lookalikes its protagonists find themselves supporting. **Neil Smith**



THE FITS

★★★★☆ OUT 24 FEBRUARY

Newcomer Royalty Hightower stars as a pre-teen tomboy who forsakes boxing practice with her brother to join a dance troupe, only for the older girls to start suffering mysterious convulsions. Director Anna Rose Holmer's narrative debut is eerily strange, grappling with issues of gender, adolescence and conformity. Mood ultimately trumps character, but Holmer's helming brims with promise. **Tim Coleman**



SOUTHERN FURY

★★★★☆ OUT 24 FEBRUARY

Known in the US by the more apt title *Arsenal*, this gung-ho crime thriller leaves no generic macho cliché behind. It centres on the brotherly bond between straight-and-narrow JP (Adrian Grenier) and loose cannon Mikey (Johnathan Schaech), who's kidnapped by Nicolas Cage's crime boss. The kind of film that serves only to add to YouTube supercuts of Cage freaking out. **Stephen Puddicombe**



LE PARC

★★★★☆ OUT 10 FEBRUARY

A French drama of two halves. Initially a tender observation of awkward teenage love, it shifts dramatically into an extended surrealist reverie. Evoking *Tropical Malady*, it's confidently shot with an understated classicism and reaches for meaty themes, such as psychoanalysis and healing from trauma, but the second half is punishingly dull, exhausting the goodwill earned by the charming opener. **Tim Coleman**

BOX OFFICE CHARTS 19.12.16 – 22.01.17



ASSASSIN'S CREED

Underwhelming box office, mostly negative reviews... alas, the Leap of Faith seems to have resulted in Planting of Face. On the other hand, it did dodge any Razzie nods. Silver lining!



SPLIT

Everybody's talking about *that* ending: when the audience reveals this is their favourite Shyamalan flick in years and are ready to forgive *The Happening*. Maybe not *The Last Airbender*, mind.



SING

Fifteen per cent of the budget reportedly went on the soundtrack; 65 on other production costs and 20 on poop scoops. Turns out the elephant was *really* nervous about singing.

UK TOP 10

| Pos | FILM | THIS MONTH | SINCE RELEASE | WEEKS OUT |
|-----|--|------------|---------------|-----------|
| 1 | Rogue One: A Star Wars Story ★★★★★ | £47M | £64.3M | 6 |
| 2 | La La Land ★★★★★ | £14.9M | £14.9M | 2 |
| 3 | Passengers ★★★ | £12.4M | £12.4M | 5 |
| 4 | Moana ★★★★★ | £11.3M | £18.2M | 8 |
| 5 | Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find... ★★★ | £9.4M | £54.3M | 10 |
| 6 | Assassin's Creed ★★★ | £7.7M | £7.7M | 3 |
| 7 | Why Him? ★★★★★ | £4.9M | £4.9M | 4 |
| 8 | Sing ★★★ | £4.2M | £4.2M | 1 |
| 9 | Ballerina ★★ | £4M | £4M | 5 |
| 10 | Monster Trucks ★★★ | £3.4M | £3.4M | 4 |

US TOP 10

| Pos | FILM | THIS MONTH | SINCE RELEASE | WEEKS OUT |
|-----|---|------------|---------------|-----------|
| 1 | Rogue One: A Star Wars Story ★★★★★ | \$357.2M | \$512M | 6 |
| 2 | Sing ★★★ | \$249.4M | \$249.4M | 5 |
| 3 | Passengers ★★★ | \$94.5M | \$94.5M | 5 |
| 4 | La La Land ★★★★★ | \$84.4M | \$89.7M | 7 |
| 5 | Hidden Figures ★★★★★ | \$84.2M | \$84.2M | 5 |
| 6 | Moana ★★★★★ | \$74.9M | \$236.8M | 9 |
| 7 | Why Him? ★★★★★ | \$58M | \$58M | 5 |
| 8 | Assassin's Creed ★★★ | \$53.8M | \$53.8M | 5 |
| 9 | Fences ★★★★★ | \$48.7M | \$48.8M | 6 |
| 10 | Split ★★★★★ | \$40.2M | \$40.2M | 1 |



FENCES

Odd how terrific films sometimes have the blandest titles (see also: *Room*) and vice versa. Not that we're saying *Strippers Vs Werewolves* would've been a better fit for Denzel's movie, obv.



LA LA LAND

Could become the first Best Picture-winning musical since 2002's *Chicago*. Unless you count *The Return Of The King Extended Edition*, where singing cast members nearly outnumber orcs.



PASSENGERS

Not the strongest performance given the mega-wattage involved, possibly down to it going up against *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*. Or the fact that it's less *Wall-E* than *Creep-E*.

STILL OUT, STILL GOOD... OUR PICK OF THE MOVIES OUT NOW



HACKSAW RIDGE ★★★★★

"Mel Gibson returns to film's frontline with a ferociously felt anti-war movie... Andrew Garfield invests his true-life character with tremendous conviction."



JACKIE ★★★★★

"A gutsy, non-linear portrait of Jacqueline Kennedy in the run-up to John F. Kennedy's death... Natalie Portman is Oscar-worthy; Mica Levi's score is sublime."



CHRISTINE ★★★★★

"This biopic of tragic news reporter Christine Chubbuck is a meticulously constructed psychological drama boasting a show-stopping turn from Rebecca Hall."



TONI ERDMANN ★★★★★

"Strikingly original, brilliantly acted, this serio-comic masterpiece constantly swerves expectations. Best catch it now before the already-rumoured Hollywood remake."

COMING SOON THE BIG HITTERS ON THE CARDS FOR NEXT MONTH...



57

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

OUT 17 MARCH

After *Maleficent* (\$517m worldwide), *Cinderella* (\$543m) and *The Jungle Book* (\$966m), Disney's latest live-action-ing of a classic 'toon couldn't be more of a sure thing if it was subtitled 'A Star Wars Story'. You know the tale: Beast meets girl, then the entire crockery cupboard puts on a show. Who will steal the most scenes? Ian McKellen's Cogsworth? Emma Thompson's Mrs. Potts? Luke Evans looks set to come up trumps as macho moron Gaston, doggedly pursuing Emma Watson's Belle. And talking of 'horny' men, here's hoping Dan Stevens' Beast shows us a soul as magnificently rendered as all his other bits and pieces.



KONG: SKULL ISLAND OUT 10 MARCH

He's big, hairy and crazy... but enough about John C. Reilly; the king of monsters is back! Director Jordan Vogt-Roberts showed a flair for outdoor capers in *The Kings Of Summer*; this time he's armed with A-listers and a huuuuge angry ape. See p76 for more.



POWER RANGERS OUT 24 MARCH

If director Dean Israelite's smart *Project Almanac* is anything to go by, this super-team reboot won't be a crass rehashing of a '90s favourite; and even if it is, it can't be worse than *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. For more on the new Fab Five, strike a heroic turning-to-p26 pose.



GHOST IN THE SHELL OUT 31 MARCH

Under The Skin, *Lucy*, *Her...* if you conveniently ignore *The Island*, Scarlett Johansson's sci-fi CV is out of this world. Fingers crossed this manga adap will be another synapse-scrambling, eye-boggling winner. For more from Scar-Jo and co, feast your optical processors on p58.



MM

DRAGS AGAINST THE ACHINE

More than 20 years after the epochal anime influenced a generation of American filmmakers, **GHOST IN THE SHELL** is back to teach modern Hollywood a thing or two about dark, adult cyberpunk. Total Film meets Scarlett Johansson and director Rupert Sanders to discuss philosophy, casting controversies and an uncompromising reimaging of a genre classic.

WORDS JORDAN FARLEY



ust agreeing to do *Ghost In The Shell*, I put the noose around my neck,” laughs Rupert Sanders. The *Snow White And The Huntsman* director is joking (we hope), but there’s a kernel of truth to the sentiment. It’s January 2017, and in less than three months, Sanders’ name will forever be emblazoned on an American remake of the revered ’95 anime that James Cameron called “a stunning work of speculative fiction” and “the first truly adult animation to reach a level of literary and visual excellence”. No pressure, then. But if anyone knows about expectations, it’s Sanders. “The biggest fear was that people who know the anime will go, ‘It’s shit.’ That kept me awake all night, because I was one of those people.”

Taking the briefest of respites from the film’s intense post-production schedule, Sanders is speaking over the phone while en route to present *Ghost In The Shell*’s more-or-less-finished score to studio execs for the first time. Footage

shown at a recent Japanese fan event included an impressive, shot-for-shot recreation of the anime’s attention-grabbing ‘shelling’ sequence, featuring a new composition of Kenji Kawai’s bone-tingling title track. While Sanders can’t confirm if the percussive piece will make the final cut, he vows to “honour [Kawai] some way in the score”.

Indeed, honouring *Ghost In The Shell* was Sanders’ mantra throughout the entire production – little surprise when his relationship with the anime dates back 22 years. “It was one of those illicit videos that was handed around to people who were into cinema,” Sanders remembers. But what was it about this contraband cassette that captured the young filmmaker’s imagination? “The visual world, the Major character, the metaphors about rebirth and reflection... It was a very new and innovative form of anime that I hadn’t seen before.”

New and innovative is putting it lightly. Dealing with (deep breath) a Cartesian dualist account of the mind-body relationship, alongside reflections on identity, memory, evolution and the age-old question of what makes us human, *Ghost In The Shell* remains a uniquely cerebral and challenging piece of cinema. After all, how many films can claim to have their own ‘Philosophy of...’ Wikipedia page running to almost 2,000 words? With *Westworld* recently putting philosophical musings about artificial intelligence back on the cultural agenda, and a certain *Blade Runner 2049* looming large off the shoulder of Orion, *Ghost In The Shell*’s return couldn’t be more fortuitously timed. The story of a counter-cyberterrorism squad tasked with capturing a hacker who can infiltrate minds and alter memories,



it was *Ghost In The Shell*’s smarts that caused headaches during the live-action adaptation process – the script defeating a trio of screenwriters and even Steven Spielberg, who turned to Sanders after seven years of stalled development.

“He’d seen some of my work before, called me in for a meeting and said, ‘Are you interested in *Ghost In The Shell*?’” Sanders recalls. “Then I pitched him my version, which was: ‘Get closer to the anime.’” In other words: make it less Hollywood. Working with *Straight Outta Compton*’s screenwriter Jonathan Herman, Sanders set out to make his *Ghost In The Shell* smaller, rather than enter an arms race with superhero movies because “you can then be a little bit more original and interesting with some of the thematics in the film”. Again, it all came back to staying true to the spirit – or should that be the *Ghost* – of the original. But it wasn’t an easy job. “The anime is a very hard thing to bring straight to the screen, because it’s so obtuse and introspective,” Sanders

ABOVE

Scarlett Johansson stars as the Major, a robo-soldier with a ‘ghost’ for a mind.

FAR RIGHT

Director Rupert Sanders behind the camera.

BELOW

Johansson with Takeshi Kitano, who plays her boss, Daisuke Aramaki.



GHOST IN THE SHELL



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'I PITCHED MY VERSION, WHICH WAS TO GET CLOSER TO THE ANIME'

RUPERT SANDERS

says, choosing his words carefully. "I had to find the route from arthouse anime to a big cinematic experience that still had that touchstone of what made it great."

Watch *Ghost In The Shell* for the first (or 10th) time and you'd be forgiven for wrestling with its ideas. That was certainly the case for Scarlett Johansson, who hadn't encountered the anime before being approached to star in Sanders' live-action adaptation. "I wasn't exactly sure what we were adapting," Johansson admits. "I didn't know how it would





➔ apply to live-action. It's so poetic and languid and esoteric, and the visuals are so specific to the anime. So, I was reticent... but I was curious."

It's days into 2017, and Johansson is sitting across from *Total Film* in a Manhattan hotel as ice and several inches of snow cover the sidewalks outside. Clad in a black pant suit, black blouse and towering heels, she's sporting a tousled blonde pixie cut and a bracelet tattoo that hint at what made her the perfect choice for *Ghost In The Shell*'s cyberpunk stylings. Following back-to-back sci-fi projects (*Her*, *Under The Skin*, *Lucy* and multiple appearances in the MCU), Johansson wasn't actively searching for a fantastical franchise to headline, but *Ghost In The Shell* wouldn't loosen its grip on her psyche. "I'd just had a baby, so my brain was not at all in

this... It just seemed huge and overwhelming. But my curiosity was piqued. I remember calling my agent, and saying, 'Let me meet with Rupert.' Because he's famous for his visual vocabulary and I thought if he could show me the stuff he'd been working on, maybe I could have a different context."

Fortunately for Johansson, Sanders' preproduction process involved assembling a 100-page graphic novel containing "images, ideas and themes, and then a rough storyline" for the film. In preparation, Sanders went back and consumed the entire *Ghost In The Shell* canon – the original anime, sequel *Innocence*, and TV series *Stand Alone Complex*. In doing so he had an epiphany: "The anime on its own, I didn't think, would work as a straight transition." Sacrilege, some might say, but Sanders

ABOVE
Naked throughout much of the anime, Johansson's Major instead wears a skin suit. It was, insists the star, far easier to move and fight in than *Black Widow*'s.

was on to something. The original anime remains the "backbone" of his adaptation, but the film incorporates aspects from across the franchise. "There's elements of Batou from *Innocence*. There's the geisha from *Stand Alone Complex*," Sanders says of *Ghost In The Shell*'s melting pot adaptation, before revealing, "In a way, the first anime, in my projected vision of *Ghost In The Shell*'s cinematic future, is the second or third film. There are elements pulled from all of them to help people come into this dense, complex, beautiful and provocative world."

Constructing *Ghost In The Shell*'s vision of the future was one of the film's biggest challenges. Shot over five-and-a-half-months on New Zealand soundstages and the streets of Hong Kong, almost everything seen on screen had to be built from scratch to service the series' peculiar parallel future; a world in which thermoptic camouflage (aka invisibility cloaks) and 'telepathic' mind comms coexist with clockwork androids and anachronistic analogue cables running between buildings. "All of these things were really important to me. I relished bringing them to life," Sanders enthuses. But the team also made their own additions to the world. "We developed these things called 'soligrams' – solid holograms that create this bizarre carnival of images and advertisements



BACK IN BLACK

SCARLETT JOHANSSON
UPDATES US ON
MARVEL'S ELUSIVE
BLACK WIDOW MOVIE...

"I've talked to [Marvel boss] Kevin Feige about it. We're creatively really compatible. I think we both agree that the character is right for a standalone, it's just a case of timing at this point, for both Marvel and myself.

"Marvel has a really huge roster. They're looking four years ahead. I also have a lot of things that I want to do. I have a lot of things that I'm developing. If I did it, I would dedicate myself completely to making it amazing. It would have to be the best version that movie could possibly be. Otherwise, I would never do it. And I don't know if I have the capacity for it, or if Marvel has the capacity for it. I think if the fans were adamant about it, it could be done. It should be done, probably.

"It'd have to be done the right way, though. It'd really have to be its own standalone and its own style and its own story. But there's a lot of great stuff that you could do with it. It could be just brutal and awesome." **JF**

GHOST IN THE SHELL

hanging in spaces around the city." The greatest testament to their achievement: watch the trailer and you'll be surprised the soligrams weren't part of *Ghost In The Shell* from the start.

Designing every costume, prop and set took thousands of man hours, according to Sanders, particularly as the director was committed to building *Ghost*

shelling sequence was also created practically, including a full 3D-printed skeleton of the Major. "We wanted that feeling of authenticity and reality, rather than doing it in a green vacuum."

If there's one thing Scarlett Johansson's Major Motoko Kusanagi isn't at the start of *Ghost In The Shell*, it's 'green'. Working alongside her

**'IT'S SO POETIC AND ESOTERIC,
SO SPECIFIC TO THE ANIME. I WAS
RETICENT... BUT I WAS CURIOUS'**

SCARLETT JOHANSSON

BELOW

Ghost is set in a society in which cybernetic augmentations are common.

In The Shell's world for real wherever possible. "It's probably 80 per cent practical, 20 per cent digital," Sanders claims, a surprising figure for a film that boasts *Ghost In The Shell's* visual splendour. "We did a lot with Weta Workshop where we built exploding animatronic geisha heads, rooftops of buildings. We built so much stuff, I think people will expect it to be visual effects." Remarkably, "most" of the film's

brawny, robo-eyed partner Batou (*Game Of Thrones'* Pilou Asbæk) and Chief Daisuke Aramaki (Takeshi Kitano) as field commander of counter-cyberterrorist task force Section 9, she's the best at what she does – primarily killing people in spectacularly efficient and acrobatic fashion. With cybernetic augmentations commonplace among the populace, the Major is a step up the evolutionary ladder – she's a fully



COVER FEATURE



synthetic cyborg housing a human consciousness, known as a Ghost.

"She's this magnificent specimen that you can tell is not exactly human," says Johansson. Feeling the need to, ahem, flesh the Major out, Johansson and Sanders worked to find the heart of a (literally) heartless character, with Sanders alluding to an "emotional quality" that will take audiences by surprise. Johansson, meanwhile, got to grips with life in a robotic chassis. "Her body doesn't betray what she's thinking, so it's a thin line between monotonous and interesting because there's a lot going on internally," Johansson explains, briefly sitting bolt upright with perfect posture to replicate the effect. "The challenge of portraying this inner life with very limited physical nuance is what I became excited about."

Another inescapable aspect of the Major's physicality in the anime had to

be taken into consideration – thanks to the requirements of her thermoptic camo, she spends significant chunks of the film naked. The remake will tone the skin show down, but Johansson naturally had questions. "As soon as I saw [*the anime*], I was like, 'Obviously I'm not naked. We've all agreed I'm not naked, right?'" she laughs, with mock concern. Instead, the Major's new suit acts more like a second skin, with Johansson once again required to slip into a cat suit to aid the effect.

"This suit's easier to wear and easier to fight in than Black Widow's," she says, with some relief. "The Black Widow suit is a neoprene fabric, and at times it's been leather – which was awful. This is a silicone-based material, so you could get shredded in it, but just your suit, not your actual body. I burned through a lot of them. It was like, 'There's another one!'"

Johansson was no stranger to the physical attributes required for a blockbuster action role, but even the full-time Avenger learned a thing or two when it came to the film's "brutal" ballets of violence. "The fight styles are very different," Johansson explains, shifting in her seat in a way that has *TF* worried she may get up and demonstrate. "She's tactical, so there's a militaristic aspect to it, and she's incredibly efficient. But she's not indestructible. She doesn't have superpowers. She's a machine. So she fights in a different way."

One of the film's major set-pieces sees the Major take on a Spider Tank in a recreation of the anime's standout climax. "We fight to the death!" Johansson proclaims excitedly. "It's a massive, humongous sequence. I had this fucking enormous weapon, and I'm running around with it. I learned to love

BELOW LEFT

Sanders with Kitano, appearing in only his third American film.

BELOW RIGHT

The crew created 'soligrams', or solid holograms, to hover over the city as futuristic adverts.



GHOST IN THE SHELL



**'OBVIOUSLY I'M NOT
NAKED. WE'VE ALL AGREED
I'M NOT NAKED, RIGHT?'**

SCARLETT JOHANSSON

it, but I felt like I was getting my arms ripped off. I think I burst a bunch of blood vessels."

But with *Ghost In The Shell*, the mind must always be considered alongside the body. And here the Major's mind embarks on a quintessential journey of discovery. With no memory of her identity before Section 9 gave her a new body, the Major's past comes into focus thanks to a figure who seems to hold all the cards – the film's villain, Kuze (Michael Pitt). "I do think that, in a lot of ways, it's a spiritual quest," says Pitt, who signed on for the film at the 11th hour when Sam Riley dropped out. "It raises a lot of questions about spirituality and science and where we wind up with those two ideas." Suffering a series of visual anomalies that are explained away as "glitches", the Major starts to recall memories of a past life that can't be ignored. "She has this idea of who she

was and who she is now and who she is supposed to be," Johansson adds.

"But she has this clawing thing in the back of her titanium skull that is calling her towards this darkness, telling her there's something more."

Supporting the Major physically and emotionally is her second-in-command, Batou. Asbæk and Johansson previously appeared together briefly in *Lucy*, which meant the pair were able to pick up where they left off. "He's this big, tough guy with a heart of gold and amazing affection for Major," Sanders says fondly. "In our first meeting, he had that wounded bear thing that Batou has. He had everything that the character needs." The film's greatest casting coup, however, came in the shape of legendary Japanese actor/writer/director/game show host Takeshi Kitano in only his third American movie. Despite being turned away "about 10 times", Sanders



COVER FEATURE



66

persisted and eventually got his man. "It was very hard to land Takeshi because he has a TV show every day in Japan. I was so tenacious with it, because I really valued his part." Enigmatically, the *Zatoichi* director is the only character who speaks Japanese in the film, another fact that almost precluded his appearance. "Everyone was like, 'Right! We can't use him.' But I said, 'No! He just speaks Japanese, that's the concept.' The hurdles kept getting taller, and I kept jumping them, but it was looking wobbly at the end."

Kuze, meanwhile, may seem familiar to fans – indeed a character goes by the same name in *Stand Alone Complex*. But Pitt's antagonist epitomises Sanders' cherry-pick approach – the character being a combination of *Ghost In The Shell*'s best-known villains, Puppet Master and Laughing Man, as well as incorporating his namesake's personal connection to the Major. With a career that's taken in films for Gus Van Sant, Michael Haneke and Bernardo Bertolucci, Pitt has largely steered clear of mainstream movie-making. It was the opportunity to work with Sanders – a friend – on a series he's admired for 20 years that convinced him to take the plunge. But it could have happened sooner. Pitt previously "signed on" to play Tetsuo in Jaume Collet-Serra's live-action adaptation of *Akira*, before it fell into development hell.

"*Akira* and *Ghost In The Shell* are two of the major franchise effects movies that I would sign on to," Pitt says over the phone from his home in Paris. A self-confessed "nerd", he immersed himself in the history of *Ghost In The Shell* in preparation. "I familiarised myself



ABOVE
Johansson was the first choice for the role, according to original *Ghost In The Shell* creator Mamoru Oshii.

BELOW
Pilou Asbaek plays Major's second-in-command, Batou.

with pretty much everything with *Ghost In The Shell*'s name on it!" he laughs. "I re-watched the original anime, I watched all of *Stand Alone Complex*, where the name Kuze comes up. Because I knew Rupert was already shooting, and there were times where he wasn't so available, so after we agreed that we should do it, I watched everything."

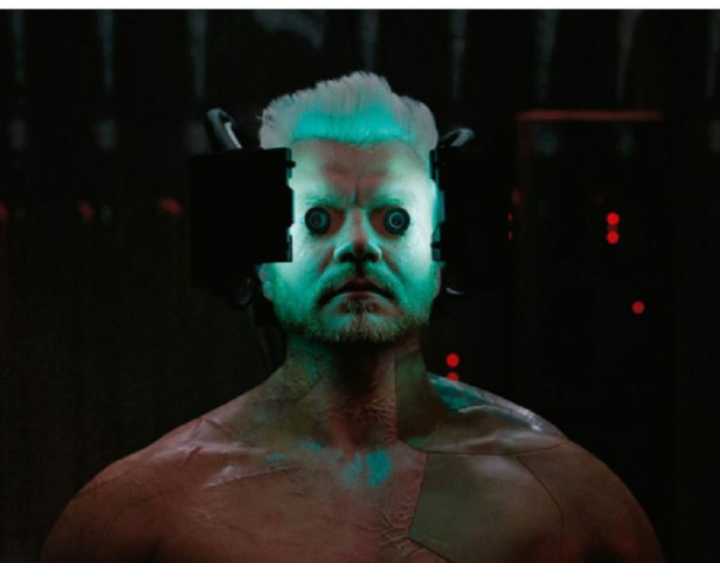
Any discussion of *Ghost In The Shell*'s cast must address the controversy surrounding accusations of 'whitewashing' due to Johansson's

Commercial appeal was doubtless a consideration. After all, outside of anime-appreciating circles, *Ghost In The Shell* is a hard sell. But with a multinational cast, and as the latest in a wave of female-led sci-fi blockbusters, *Ghost In The Shell* is positively progressive in Hollywood terms. Not bad for a 22-year-old story.

"There's no romantic throughline in this film. This is not a woman who's trying to scratch out a life for herself in the workplace. It's not a family drama.

'IT RAISES A LOT OF QUESTIONS ABOUT SPIRITUALITY AND SCIENCE AND WHERE WE END UP'

MICHAEL PITT



portrayal of what was originally an Asian character. As far as Sanders is concerned, it was about hiring the right person for the role. "[Mamoru] Oshii reflected that so well when he said, of everyone out there, she was the choice for him, too. That sealed it for me," Sanders says, matter-of-factly. "I'm not going to go into the millions of reasons why A or B works or doesn't work or the whole concept of 'what is the cyborg shell?' and 'who is Motoko?' and all those kind of things. To me, Scarlett is the best actress of her generation for this kind of role. She embodies the Major."

It's about a woman who is coming of age, who is a reluctant hero; a person who is saving humanity from themselves after seeing the worst side of it," Johansson says, with the experience of someone who's seen, and done, it all.

"It's a really powerful story, not one that often comes across the desk. It's epic. It deals with these huge existential questions that we ask ourselves. That, on top of being able to kick ass and be vulnerable, makes it iconic."

GHOST IN THE SHELL OPENS 31 MARCH.

ANIME 101

WANT TO GIVE ANIME A GO?
DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START?
LET OUR MUST-SEE-ANIME-MOVIE
LIST GUIDE YOU...

START HERE

1 SPIRITED AWAY

Practically the entire Studio Ghibli collection is essential viewing, and the perfect place to start for anime newcomers, but if we have to settle on one film that epitomises Ghibli's magical realist sensibilities, and sees the studio at the height of its power, it has to be Hayao Miyazaki's bewitching *Spirited Away*. To this day it remains the only hand-drawn animation to win the Best Animated Film Oscar.

SEE ALSO: *HOWL'S MOVING CASTLE*



3 WOLF CHILDREN

Mamoru Hosoda's 2012 tear-jerker is the story of a young mother who's left to care for her two children when their father dies. To make matters worse, he was a werewolf, and raising half-wolf, half-human children comes with its own complications. This achingly beautiful coming-of-age tale puts a unique twist on a familiar subject matter, as the young hybrids are torn between their two natures.

SEE ALSO: *MY NEIGHBOUR TOTORO*

TRY THESE NEXT

5 PERFECT BLUE

Proof, were it needed, that anime isn't all trippy fairytales and men with giant swords, *Perfect Blue* is a psychological thriller about identity and the perception of reality. Mima Kirigoe is a member of a hugely successful pop group who decides to pursue an acting career, only to be stalked by an obsessive fan while seemingly losing her grip on what's real.

SEE ALSO: *MILLENNIUM ACTRESS*



2 YOUR NAME

Makoto Shinkai's instant-classic recently pipped *Spirited Away* to become the highest grossing anime of all time, and with good reason. The J-Pop-fuelled tale of a teenage boy and girl who body swap over space and time is charming, inventive and infectiously joyous. Visually dazzling and emotionally resonant, it was one of 2016's finest, anime or not, and a categorical crowd-pleaser.

SEE ALSO: *THE GIRL WHO LEAPT THROUGH TIME*



4 TOKYO GODFATHERS

Liberally riffing on the nativity story, this heartwarming Christmas Eve-set fable from acclaimed writer/director Satoshi Kon is about three homeless people (a runaway teen, an ageing transvestite and a middle-aged alcoholic) who discover a baby abandoned in the rubbish on the streets of Tokyo, and set out to find her parents. In short, it's anime's *It's A Wonderful Life*.

SEE ALSO: *ROUJIN Z*





6 NINJA SCROLL

Yoshiaki Kawajiri's ultraviolent '93 anime was cut by 52 seconds upon release in the UK – a rare claim to fame for an animated movie. It's the story of Jubei, a sword for hire who must track down and kill the Eight Devils Of Kimon – demonic ninjas with supernatural powers. The voice acting may be a little ropery, but the highly influential action holds up to this day.

SEE ALSO: *FIST OF THE NORTH STAR*



7 PAPRIKA

Inception on acid is the best way to describe Satoshi Kon's final film. In the near future, newly invented dream therapy technology allows therapists to view and enter a patient's subconscious. But when the device is stolen, Paprika, one of the system's key architects, enters a series of psychedelic dreamscapes to track the dangerous tech down. What it lacks in clarity it more than makes up for with eye-popping visuals.

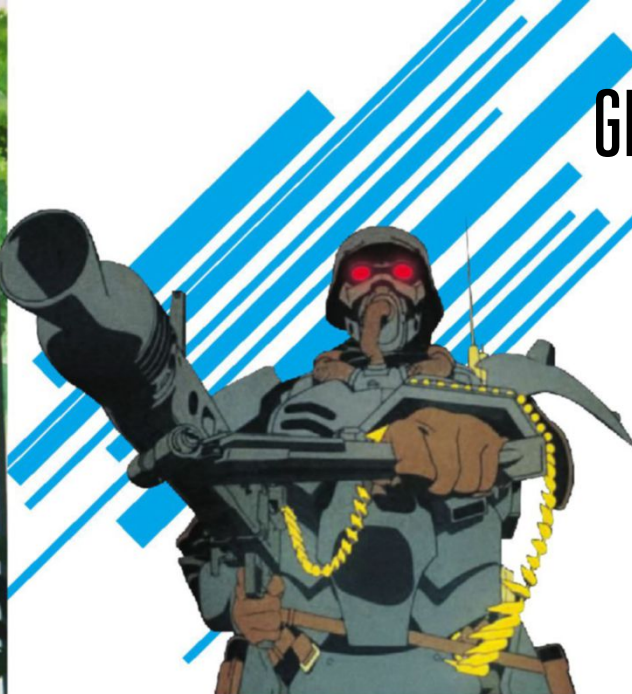
SEE ALSO: *SUMMER WARS*



8 METROPOLIS

Somewhat confusingly, this 2001 anime isn't an adaptation of Fritz Lang's 1927 classic, but is loosely based on Osamu 'Astro Boy' Tezuka's 1949 manga, and boasts a screenplay by Akira's Katsuhiro Ôtomo. Set in a magnificent city where robots live as second-class citizens to humanity, it's about a detective and his nephew who help a mysterious young robot girl.

SEE ALSO: *STEAMBOY*



GHOST IN THE SHELL

11 JIN-ROH: THE WOLF BRIGADE

Set in an alternate 1950s, where Germany has conquered Japan, *Jin-Roh* is a gut-punchingly bleak thriller. Kazuki is a member of an antiterror unit who falls for the sister of a suicide bomber he failed to kill. As a relationship blossoms, it's soon revealed that there's more to the peculiar pairing's relationship than meets the eye. A tough, but rewarding, watch.

SEE ALSO: *GRAVE OF THE FIREFLIES*

9 NEO-TOKYO

Three of Japan's finest writer/directors teamed up to make this anime anthology. Rintaro's 'Labyrinth labyrinths' sees a young girl enter a strange labyrinth world during a game of hide and seek with her cat. Yoshiaki Kawajiri's 'Running Man' is *Death Race* by way of *Scanners*, and every bit as good as that sounds. Finally Katsuhiro Ôtomo's 'Construction Cancellation Order' is a cautionary tale about dependence on technology, but is set in a culturally dated depiction of South America.

SEE ALSO: *THE ANIMATRIX*



NOW WE'RE TALKING



10 GHOST IN THE SHELL

Mamoru Oshii's cyberpunk classic influenced an entire generation of filmmakers, and gave birth to sequels, TV shows and spin-offs. It's easy to see why. As well as dazzling action and a world you just want to get lost in, *GITS* deals in subject matter meatier than a deli counter. If anything its only problem is that it's too cerebral.

SEE ALSO: *PATLABOR 2: THE MOVIE*



12 AKIRA

Alongside *Ghost In The Shell*, *Akira* is the granddaddy of modern anime. Set in a stunning neon-drenched cyberpunk city, it's about Tetsuo – a biker turned psychic psychopath who sets out to free the all-powerful Akira. The only people that can stop him are three mild-mannered psychics and Tetsuo's best friend Kaneda. Brain-bendingly deep and stunningly animated, its influence can be seen in everything from *The Matrix* to *Chronicle*.

SEE ALSO: *TEKKONKINKREET*

MAKING OF

Seventeen years after Hugh Jackman debuted as Wolverine, the star and director James Mangold set out to make a superhero film like none yet seen. With **LOGAN**, a grounded, violent adios to the X-Men's prime berserker, they might have achieved it...

WORDS KEVIN HARLEY

PHOTOGRAPHY DEAN BRADSHAW, JAMES MANGOLD, BEN ROTHSTEIN

THE GOODBY

A

man walks into a bar, picks an argument with the wrong guy. “No man takes a beating like that without a mark to show for it,” growls the newcomer, goading the stogie-sucking giant who just emerged unscathed from a pulverising screen fight. Several scraps, 17 years, eight films, many cigars and numerous bounce-backs on from his screen arrival, Hugh Jackman’s Wolverine might have pulled off another miracle: a fresh, original superhero movie in a market stuffed to the muttonchops with them.

In James Mangold’s *Logan*, the clotted timelines of *X-Men: Days Of Future Past* and the global meltdown of *Apocalypse* are gone. The escalating cast-lists and universe-building found in *Captain America: Civil War* and *Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Justice* are missing. There’s no sign of the 12A/PG-13 rating granted to most superhero movies. Instead, Jackman and writer/director James Mangold favoured another approach: aim for smaller, R-rated, personal. And deliver a contained send-off for Jackman’s Logan, not a film strewn with seeds sown for later films to nurture.

Playing Wolverine for #onelasttime, Jackman approached his farewell with a clear agenda. “We wanted something that felt very different, very fresh and ultimately something very human, because it seems to me that the strength of X-Men and the strength of Wolverine is more the humanity than his superpower. For me, exploring this character for the last time, it was important to get to the heart of who that human was. You know, more than what his claws can do.”

When Mangold directed 2013’s character-rejuvenating second Wolverine solo film, *The Wolverine*, he started work from someone else’s script. With *Logan*, he was a ground-level progenitor, able to make his imprint stick. Featuring nods to *Shane* and Clint Eastwood’s *Unforgiven* besides echoes of Mark Millar’s gore-guzzling comics arc ‘Old Man Logan’, *Logan* shares more with Mangold’s roots in indie drama and westerns – *Cop Land*, the 3:10 *To Yuma* remake – than superhero epics.

Regarding the latter, he says, “With a lot of these movies, I watch and I don’t see the movie. I see a kind of extended marketing effort. “Working on this film, what I said to my collaborators and myself was: pretend this movie isn’t about superheroes. It was, how would you make this story function if it was a movie about a son taking care of his father. He’s a wanted man and they’re living on the lam. Then someone comes along and says, ‘This is your daughter.’ If we didn’t have the crutch of superpowers, how would the story function as a character piece?”

In short, never mind the *Apocalypse*: welcome to the western *Paper Moon*. With claws on.

ONNG
BYE



72

X-TRA CARE

For any Wolverine fans who've been living in a smelting plant for the last year, the story goes thus. The Logan we encounter here is a shadow of his old self. Hiding near Mexico, he is weakened and tragedy-stricken. His regenerative powers have wilted; his skin is laced with scars. And his hair's greying. Like Jackman says, "He really doesn't have much to live for."

Half a decade has passed since the perky reunion at *Days Of Future Past*'s climax, all the better for Mangold to disentangle Logan from the *X-Men* saga's continuity spaghetti. Here, the focus is targeted clearly at an alterna-family dynamic. Logan is caring for his screen father figure, Patrick Stewart's Charles Xavier, as the Prof wrestles with what Jackman pitches as an X-twist on a real-world illness.

"One thing we explore is what happens when the most powerful brain on the planet falls victim to dementia of some kind. We don't get into specifics. Is it Alzheimer's? Is it dementia? But we know that he's now dangerous because when his brain doesn't work, things happen. He has seizures and people around him fall into comas. Cars crash..." Their relationship is no smooth ride, either: "What I loved about what Jim wrote is that you see and feel the frustration of caring for someone like that... it's very real life, in a way."

The family is enriched by *Extras* star Stephen Merchant, "hilarious" (says Jackman) and "funny, sweet, endearing" (says Mangold),

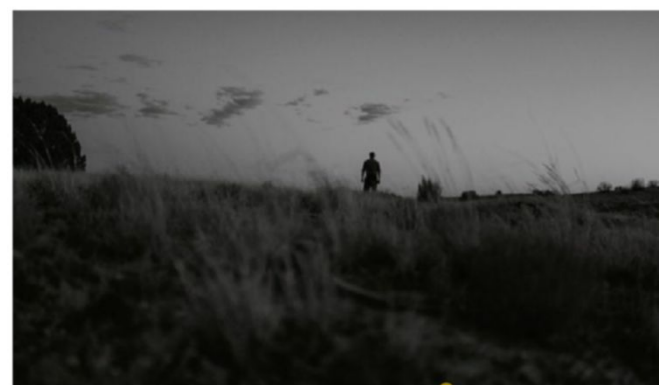
as mutant-tracker Caliban. Then something else happens, seismically. Enter gifted youngster Laura, modelled on clawed comics clone Laura Kinney/X-23, whose links to our hirsute hero jolt him into his own ailment: dad-shock.

For Wolverine, the Laura/Logan relationship resembles something satisfyingly full-circle: it seems to echo his struggle to resist the urge to nurture Anna Paquin's Rogue in *X-Men* (2000). "Those are some of the best scenes in the first *X-Men* – the idea of Logan having a tender side but never wanting to connect or be soft," says Mangold. "This film is very much about a reluctant father. He doesn't want to admit he is a father, he does not want to pretend he is a father, he does not want to play the role of a father. It scares him."

And she's particularly scary, given she has claws and mood swings as profoundly dangerous as his own."

FERAL YOUTH

Mangold had his own hands full finding the right actor for such a demanding role, a kind of origin story teased into Logan's endgame. He found his Laura in Dafne Keen, whose previous screen credit is BBC Worldwide's *The Refugees*. Make no mistake: little miss sunshine she is not. "I needed a Spanish-speaking 11-year-old who was profoundly



MAIN
Familiar odds for Logan, but is he still up for the fight?

ABOVE
An R-rating allows the film to explore more adult themes of life and mortality.

LEFT
Narcos' Boyd Holbrook plays big bad Donald Pierce.



physically capable and a great actor. We searched the world – and in Madrid, we found Dafne. She’s an incredible kid with incredible focus and instincts. And very tough. I did not want Laura to be cute. I wanted a mini-Logan. That was really important.”

Doubly so, given what arrives in Laura’s wake. Hired by Richard E. Grant’s shadowy scientist Dr. Zander Rice, mutant-hater Donald Pierce (Boyd Holbrook) comes looking for Laura with his cyborg Reavers. Whether or not Pierce is Logan’s deadliest threat, *Narcos* break-out star Holbrook was on the page when it came to embracing the project’s ‘grounded’ pitch.

“I avoid thinking things like, ‘Is he the worst person ever to be trailing Logan,’” says Mangold. “I’m more concerned that you feel Pierce is an actual person in our world, as opposed to a creation. In that way, he feels more dangerous because he feels like reality rather than some kind of pageant. Boyd is amazing as just a straightforward, bad-ass southern boy with one arm who’s determined to make his boss happy and get the girl back.”

Cue red-band mayhem? Don’t doubt it. Claws pierce heads. Other heads are, violently, detached by Laura. Yet the decision to pursue an R-rating was not, says Mangold, taken lightly. “Did anyone need convincing? The studio did. I think they warmed [to the idea] but were not over the moon. Then we offered to make the movie for less – Hugh took a pay cut.”

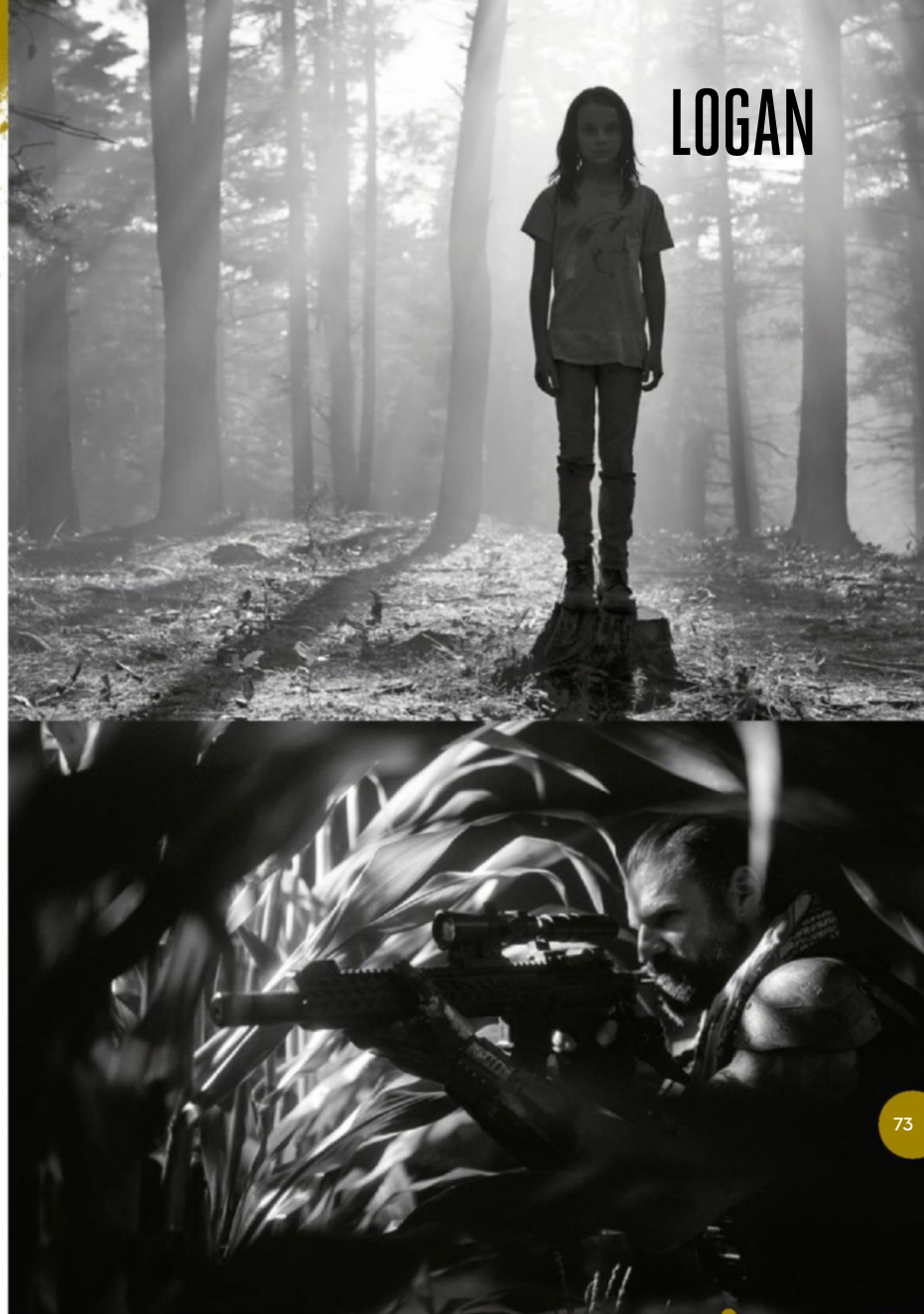
And then? Along came a potty-mouthed pansexual pun-slinger to open studios’ minds. “In the middle of all that, *Deadpool* opened. And on top of that, in the last couple of years there were big-budget, PG and PG-13 superhero films that were relative box-office disappointments. So, there was a combination of factors to justify the R-rating: the feeling that maybe people were getting exhausted with movies the way they’d been getting made, the feeling that there was in *Deadpool* an avenue of success, and the fact that we were willing to make this movie for less than these movies usually cost.”

For Mangold, the R-rating helped focus the project so that it felt distinct: distinctly adult, distinctly his, and emphatically not a package tooled for maximum demographic reach. “We were interested in making a rated-R film not just for bad language or violence or nudity. It was to make a movie that was clearly for grown-ups.

“When you’re making a tentpole film, there is an expectation, like a buffet, that there will be something for everybody. The problem is, that does not make a good meal. Usually, the best meal is when someone takes a position, decides on a menu and serves something that will leave some people unhappy but will hopefully make many people happy. I feel like if you make something cute for kids, something violent for adults or young men and something heart-warming for others, it makes the movie feel schizophrenic.”

FINAL CUT

Thus focused, Mangold felt liberated to dig deep into Logan. “The rating was a way to also create a space for Hugh and I to ask adult questions about life, immortality, love, parenthood. And about violence, and when is it justified. One thing I tried to put in the last *Wolverine* movie was the idea that violence



and killing takes a toll. You cannot kill without it leaving a scar, not only on the outside but on the inside.”

Wherever this death toll steers Wolverine, the sense of finality is unavoidable. #onelasttime, Jackman tweeted. Although internet scuttlebutt has revved up rumours/hopes of a Jackman cameo in *Deadpool 2* (#onemoretime?), internet scuttlebutt – *whisper it* – might not be reliable.

“I think Hugh is committed to this being a curtain on his performance in this role,” says Mangold. “That’s my most solid answer. He wants to go out on a high note. He’s done this part longer than almost any movie star has played any single character in movie history. He feels like he has done the laps.”

So, should fans without adamantium-coated emotions steel themselves? “I would hope so,” says Mangold.

“The idea for me of making a more intimate film is that the film is an emotional experience as well as a spectacle. That it *moves* you. Money can buy spectacle but it can’t buy feeling.” In short? Don’t expect to emerge from one last round without marks to show for it.

LOGAN OPENS ON 1 MARCH.

TOP

A global search led to the casting of Dafne Keen as “mini-Logan” Laura.

ABOVE

Pierce’s Reavers want to get their hands on Laura. And not for a playdate.

‘HUGH IS COMMITTED. HE WANTS TO GO OUT ON A HIGH NOTE’
JAMES MANGOLD

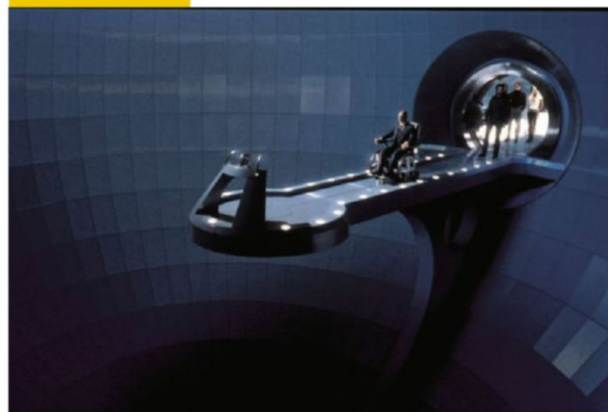
MAKING OF BLADES OF GORY

As Jackman retracts his claws, we celebrate his 10 keenest incisions so far...



KNIVES OUT X-MEN

For their initial sighting, Wolverine's claws had to make an impression. And they do: when some numb-nuts pulls a knife on him, Logan's blades slide from his knuckles in sizzling, steaming, X-treme close-up. And when a barman trains a gun on him, Wolverine slices the barrels in two. No words needed.



SHARP WIT X-MEN

Whenever the X-saga risks flirting with pomposity, the bubble needs to be pricked. Jackman got good at this nice and early. Introduced to the spherical majesty of Cerebro, Logan looks on it with due amazement before killing the pan stone dead. "Well," he quips, "it certainly is a big, round room."



TOOTH AND CLAW X-MEN

"Hey bub," snarks Wolverine, kicked senseless by Sabretooth, "I'm not finished with you yet." High on the Statue of Liberty, the Sabretooth/Wolverine ruckus plays like a Logan best-of: marvel at how his blades slice chunks off Ms. Liberty, before he makes a noble sacrifice and still finds time to crack wise.

LOGAN'S RUN X2

Stryker's men attack the X-mansion. Big mistake: Logan leaves no anatomical part of his opponents un-bloodied. While a special "ouch" is reserved for the surprise foot impalement, you can't beat Logan's trademark agit-runs down corridors, full-throated "raaaaahs!" and scream-faced leap from a balcony for gloriously camp carnage.



SHOCK AND CLAW X2

"Holy shit..." Wolverine's surprise shows when Kelly Hu's Lady Deathstrike reveals her claws. Cue one of the most gymnastic *X-Men* fights, with Jackman delivering an almost Roger Moore-ish fusillade of cheeky raised eyebrows as Deathstrike flings him from floor to ceiling, until he bests her with a sneak's move.



CLAWS AT WAR X-MEN ORIGINS: WOLVERINE

With lots of dramatic pauses, cigar-chomping and teeth-bared scenes of Logan running, the war montage is the highlight of Gavin Hood's *Origins* misfire. In a slo-mo symphony of helicopters, bayonets, muddy trenches and mullets blowing in the wind, Wolverine and Liev Schreiber's Sabretooth chaaaaaaarge through a century of conflict.



NO SMALL TALK X-MEN: FIRST CLASS

Wolverine rediscovered his edge. Looking suave, Erik Lensherr and Prof. X introduce themselves to the macho mutant at the bar. Wolvie's stab-back? Short and sharp: "Go fuck yourself." "To me," said Jackman, "that, in about 15 seconds, sums up the character."

TRAIN AND PAIN The Wolverine

Wolverine squares off against a Yakuza heavy on a speeding Japanese bullet train. On top of a bullet train. Digging his claws in for the duration, ol' Wolvie braves whipping winds and lashing knives before his great jump, flying down the train and hurtling into his sorry victim claws-first.



BONE SORE X-MEN: DAYS OF FUTURE PAST

Zapped to the past, Wolverine realises he can still surprise himself. Waking up in 1973, he's assailed by tough guys. Cue the claws... only this time, they're bone. "What the hell? God damn it!" barks Logan, before stealing a dog tag and wryly repeating Kitty Pryde's advice: "Peaceful thoughts..." As if.



UNCAGED HEAT X-MEN: APOCALYPSE

Wolverine wastes not a second of his fleeting cameo. You could damage your brain unpicking the dangling story-threads involved, so just enjoy watching Logan doing what he does best: slicing, leaping, snarling, "raaaaah"-ing, flaring his gym-pumped nostrils and looking good in shorts. All that's missing is a quip.

MAKING OF



APE- LOCAL YPSSE NOW

77

A Vietnam War movie with a 100ft gorilla? Total Film sits down with stars Tom Hiddleston and Brie Larson, and director Jordan Vogt-Roberts, to discover the crazed vision that is **KONG: SKULL ISLAND**... WORDS JAMIE GRAHAM 

MAKING OF



July 2016: *Total Film* is ensconced in the Hilton San Diego Bayfront hotel with the main players of *Kong: Skull Island*, who've arrived fresh from a presentation in Comic-Con's famous Hall H. They are, fair to say, jazzed by the riotous reception. Tom Hiddleston is all handshakes and backslaps; Brie Larson has a smile as big as Kong's heart; and director Jordan Vogt-Roberts, who sports a magnificent ZZ Top beard, is in loquacious form.

"I used to go to the public library as a kid and they used to have these heavy books on movie monsters and creatures," he starts. "As a kid, you're not watching a black-and-white movie from the '30s, but King Kong was this icon and this presence to me. My dad bought a 12-inch King Kong – it was on my dresser. King Kong had such incredible resonance just as an icon in pop culture. Later, when I really got into my film history phase and discovered



the '33 film, it kind of shattered me because there's stuff in that film that you look at today, and you're like, "Oh my God, how did they do that?" It's such a beautiful film. There's such life to the way that character is animated."

Vogt-Roberts' enthusiasm is infectious. Watching his eyes light up as he talks, it's not hard to see why Warner Bros and Legendary handed him the \$200m reboot that is *Kong: Skull Island*, despite the only movie on his CV being indie dramedy *The Kings Of Summer*. It is a risk, sure, but one that paid off handsomely when *Monsters*

SKULL SQUAD
Brie Larson, Tom Hiddleston and director Jordan Vogt-Roberts on location.

director Gareth Edwards was handed the *Godzilla* gig and *Safety Not Guaranteed* helmer Colin Trevorrow took on *Jurassic World* – both films that Legendary were involved in. And besides, Vogt-Roberts walked into their offices with a vision so striking it was impossible to ignore.

"They came to me with a script that took place in 1917," he remembers. "It took place before the original film. I just said, 'This is really interesting, but I can't make this movie. Why does this movie have a reason for being?' At that point they said, 'OK, what movie would you want to make?' I wanted to



KONG: SKULL ISLAND

texture of the film. It's easier for us as actors to imagine that we're on a remote island when we actually are in places like Oahu in Hawaii, or Mount Tamborine in Australia, or the lakes of Ninh Binh in Vietnam. If the actors and the crew are in a real swamp in Vietnam, surrounded by real mountains or cliffs, it's very easy to place Kong in context – as opposed to a group of actors surrounded by greenscreen."

Larson, who plays war photojournalist and peace activist Weaver, nods. "I really lucked out with this being my first movie that relied on CGI," says the Oscar-winner. "Apart from the fact that Kong obviously wasn't there, I had everything there to work off. My character's coming from this place of deep compassion for nature and untouched land, and we were shooting in places that had been

'I LUCKED OUT WITH THIS BEING MY FIRST MOVIE WITH CGI'

BRIE LARSON

untouched that hadn't been onscreen before. I got to really connect with it." She grins. "I don't know, maybe I'm a crazy person, but I can connect just as deeply with the beauty of a tree as I can with a child. I'm a wacko!"

While King Kong will undoubtedly be the biggest star on show, the human cast, with Hiddleston and Larson joined by Goodman, Samuel L. Jackson and John C. Reilly, is an impressively eclectic ensemble, and Vogt-Roberts promises they have plenty to sink their teeth into. "My pitch to the actors upfront was: I want to make a movie where it's as important to linger on a character's face or eyes as it is to cut to the giant, cool spectacle thing. Look at *Die Hard* or *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* – the spectacle comes from character.

You only really give a shit about spectacle if it's rooted in people that you care about and it's a situation that you care about. We set out to make the funhouse mirror of *Apocalypse Now*, taking elements of *The Thin Red Line* that are meditative and lyrical and impressionistic – and



make a Vietnam War movie with monsters. I wanted to take elements of *Apocalypse Now* and *Platoon*, and create this genre mash-up. I'd seen the Stones and Creedence and all those songs in a billion Vietnam War movies, but I was yet to see that soundtrack set to a monster movie. I just became obsessed with this idea. I thought they were going to laugh at me, but they said, 'Yeah.'"

Vogt-Roberts' reimagining extended to real locations in far-flung corners of the planet. The movie, set in the 1970s, sees a team of explorers, scientists and soldiers venture to the titular isle in the Pacific Ocean, unaware that it is home to a menagerie of beasts to take the breath away – for good, in some deadly cases. The director had no interest in creating the verdant backdrop out of pixels, and instead pitched his actors into "tactile" environments.

"His insistence and encouragement that the production shoot on real locations is something that paid off immeasurably," insists Hiddleston, whose Captain James Conrad is a former SAS tracker hired by government official Bill Randa (John Goodman). "He decided to take us to some places on the planet which are remote and very beautiful and partially dangerous. That, I think, you can really feel in the



Early concept art depicting the new Kong, plus another Skull Island monster.



then really trying to merge that with something that's big and commercial."

Also vital to Vogt-Roberts' brave new world was his (re)vision for Kong himself. For starters, he needed to be bigger than any previous screen version in order to duke it out with Godzilla down the line – yes, these kings of monsters now share a cinematic universe, with Legendary and Warner Bros joining forces to bring us a clash of the titans, scheduled for 2020. And

move, and created this godlike beast that has a spirit in simple actions. And then he came back throughout production. We played around and tested a lot of things. And then Toby [Kebbell, who provided "facial references" for Kong] came in and did some face-cap for us. ILM took those initial tests I was doing and they really took it to the next level. A big part of this movie is key frame animation by hand, really bringing it together. The way Kong

ACT OF WAR
Hiddleston and Vogt-Roberts discuss Kong's war movie aesthetic.

some CG creation that doesn't exist," he says. "In that respect, Kong felt very similar. But you're always in a specific scene, and those things are different."

Larson, meanwhile, learned on the job. "I always play off of people's eyes," she says. "I really connect with my acting partner. When their pupils are dilating, you get this front-row seat into their soul. So when you don't have that to work off, you have these conversations like, 'What is his mood? Does he look like he's gonna charge?' And then you play it through in your imagination. We used music a lot on set. With some of the bigger scenes, we would bring out speakers and they would just play Rolling Stones or whatever the vibe was. You're trying to get a bunch of people to all react to the same invisible thing at the same time, and music became a great way to orchestrate that."

Of course, all this talk of getting used to a supersized Kong could almost act as a metaphor for the situation Vogt-Roberts found himself in, going from *The Kings Of Summer* to a tentpole blockbuster. There were rumours of discord on set, and the trailers suggest John C. Reilly's Ralph, a WW2 veteran who's been trapped on the island for years, has wandered in

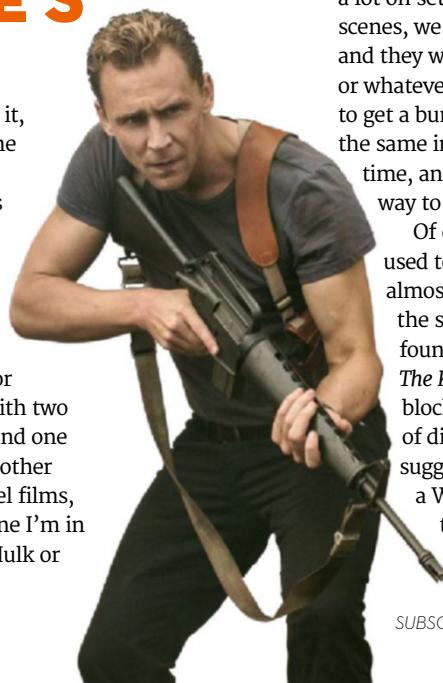
'I WANTED TO GO BACK TO THE MOVIE MONSTER VERSION OF KONG. HE'S A GOD' JORDAN VOGT-ROBERTS

so this Kong is 100ft tall – four times the size of the apes in the 1933 film and Peter Jackson's 2005 remake – and will return to its original bipedal form.

"I wanted to really go back to the movie monster version of Kong – not be the anatomically correct, silverback gorilla version of Kong [in Peter Jackson's film]," says the director. "For me, Kong is this lonely god, this morose god, this lumbering force that has a real solitude to him. For me, it was important that you look up at him. [Motion-capture expert] Terry Notary came in initially and did a lot of work as we broke away from how a gorilla would anatomically

moves, there is a stylisation to it, and there is a heightened anime quality to it at times."

As impressive as the effects are, however, none of the above helped the actors on set when they needed to gaze 100ft into the sky and see eyes as big as campervans. For Hiddleston, whose quest for verisimilitude saw him train with two former British Royal Marines and one former US Navy Seal, it was another day at the office. "In the Marvel films, I'm often called upon to imagine I'm in a scene with Iron Man or the Hulk or



KONG: SKULL ISLAND



FIGHT, FIGHT, FIGHT...

Director and stars talk (or rather don't) about *Godzilla Vs Kong*...

Brie Larson

"I know about as much as everybody else. I know it seems like I might know these things, but I learn about a lot of what's going on in my life from press releases!"

Tom Hiddleston

"I honestly don't know [*if I'll be in it*]. It really is far out... It's in the lap of the powers that be at Legendary. Above my pay grade."

Jordan Vogt-Roberts

"Early on, when I came in, I said, 'Look, I know this connects to a larger universe, and we need to really respectfully build that. But our job - and my job, in particular - is to tell *this* story, and to make something that feels contained and has a reason for being.' So many movies are serialised now. What I love about films is they have a beginning, middle and end. My job, as far as I saw it, was to tell the best version of this story, and obviously be considerate of what they need to do for the future. But I think we handled it pretty delicately. I don't think people are going to feel there's a bunch of franchise-building shoehorned in."

from a different film - his buffoonery seems at odds with the sombre atmosphere. Studio intervention to 'lighten' the mood? Not at all, says Vogt-Roberts.

"My favourite movies play with tone," he says. "I think that a lot of movies are afraid to play with tone these days. *Kong* is a fusion, where you have the harsh reality and sombre nature of things, but there's an extreme levity and sense of fun and sense of absurdity that I think is very much what my voice is. John C. Reilly's a huge part of that. He's this character who shows up and should fundamentally break the movie, he's so insane, but he has such an incredible human beating heart that you go with it. I'm really excited for people to see how this movie tiptoes that line. It's just a little non-traditional in terms of tone for a big movie like

this. But I think that's what actually makes it fresh and accessible."

Hiddleston cuts in, keen to stress just what a blast *Kong: Skull Island* is despite being a war movie with monsters. "It's huge fun," he grins. "So fast and fun. It's a big film about a huge monkey - and it really delivers."

But did the sheer scale not threaten to break Vogt-Roberts at any point? "Filmmaking is filmmaking. The fundamentals of telling a story - whether you're making a commercial or a web series or a TV show or an indie or a blockbuster - remain the same. There was certainly a learning curve, and there are certainly a lot of things you can only learn as trial by fire, but I thrive off of that stuff. I love special effects. You're in situations where your entire crew is up to their waist in a cold swamp in the middle of Vietnam. You go to places where no one's shot a movie and you're literally building an infrastructure to support a film this size.

"I was in there every day, collaborating and learning and building stuff - doing something new with the King Kong mythology for the first time in a long time. I loved the challenge of it and really trying to make a giant movie that has a voice, because I feel so many of these big movies don't have voices." He pauses and strokes at that gigantic beard that might have been made with the hair off Kong's back. "I guess we'll leave it up to the audience to decide how we pulled it off."

KONG: SKULL ISLAND OPENS ON 10 MARCH.



THE RIVER WILD
Hiddleston channels his inner-Sheen for some *Apocalypse Now* magic.

ON SET

GUN





83

CRAZY

A non-stop shootout in a Boston warehouse, the '70s-set **FREE FIRE** is Ben Wheatley's most outrageous film yet... and that's just the fashion. Total Film goes on set for three days of dodging lead and biting dust with an all-star cast led by Cillian Murphy, Armie Hammer and Brie Larson...

WORDS JAMIE GRAHAM

DAY ONE BULLETS & BEST-LAID PLANS

It's July 2015 and any patrons shopping in Marks & Spencer in Hollingbury, on the outskirts of Brighton, are probably hitting the ground right now. The gunshots emanating from the warehouse behind M&S are deafening. Last week, a thousand rounds were squeezed off in one scene. Today the gunfire is sporadic but the vast, derelict space reeks of cordite, while sulphurous dialogue is spit, snarled and screamed in voices thick with desperation and blood, to confirm this is Hell on Earth.

This long-deserted warehouse – its peeling walls and crumbling pillars now pocked with bullet holes, its floor littered with rubble and glass – is the playground of Ben Wheatley's sixth feature, *Free Fire*. Set in 1978, it is, in essence, a climactic shootout spread over an entire movie, as a gun deal between IRA soldiers Chris and Frank (Cillian Murphy, Michael Smiley) and South African gunrunner Vernon (Sharlto Copley) goes rapidly south in a Boston warehouse. Also caught in the crossfire are two Americans – intermediary Justine (Brie Larson) and suave middleman Ord (Armie Hammer) – plus several figures who serve as hired muscle: Stevo (Sam Riley) and Bernie (Enzo Cilenti) are on the Irish side of the divide; Martin (Babou Ceesay), Harry (Jack Reynor) and Gordon (Noah Taylor) back up Vernon.

Watching characters huddle behind pillars and hobble towards the battered van that stands in the middle of the

TRIGGER HAPPY
Sam Riley and Enzo Cilenti are in the IRA contingent of the gun deal gone bad.

'EVERY BULLET HOLE AND EXPLOSION WAS PLANNED' BEN WHEATLEY

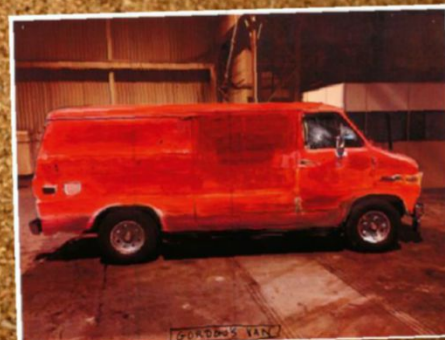
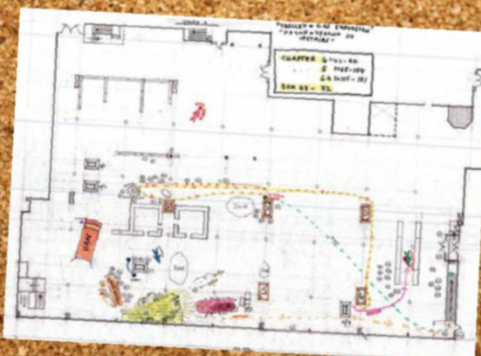
floor to tease a way out of this hellfire, it all seems like pure chaos. In truth, this is a perfected storm, with months of computations and choreography going into mapping out every foray, collision and ricochet of the 13 shooters.

"I tend to draw storyboards for every script now," says Wheatley between takes, joking that he's "lost his nerve" when it comes to shooting on the fly, as he did on *Down Terrace*, *Kill List* and *Sightseers*. "I don't have the storyboards on set, but doing it makes sure I've thought about everything. If you just see it in your mind's eye, you tend to see the exciting bits, not the boring bits, and it's the boring bits where you come unstuck – someone coming in and out of a door."

Making the most of the quick break, the cast gather outside the main entrance of the warehouse, slurping coffee from mugs sporting their names and sucking on cigarettes. Shot almost

entirely in this one location, *Free Fire* is a rare movie where each member of the ensemble is in every scene, meaning a 10-minute pause is to be savoured. Wheatley, it seems, never gets a break, either dialoguing with regular DoP Laurie Rose or sitting himself down in the corner of the warehouse to cut the day's footage into shape. He does, after all, know the exact film he wants.

"I built the set inside [videogame] *Minecraft* and walked about inside it," he continues. "We drew loads of maps. Every bullet hole and explosion was planned seven weeks before. If you didn't know where they were, you were fucked. I cut it together and put sound effects all over it, watched that back; recorded all the dialogue and put it over the top." Not that he regards actors as cattle. "Part of directing is making sure performances are good, creating the right mood for the actors," he notes. "It involves a lot of listening."



LOOK BACK IN ANGER

THE TOUGH '70S THRILLERS THAT HAVE INFLUENCED *FREE FIRE*...

Mean Streets 1973

Martin Scorsese puts his youth on the screen in this tale of Little Italy's foot-soldier gangsters, their daily deals threatened by the reckless behaviour of Robert De Niro's combustible Johnny Boy.

The Friends Of Eddie Coyle 1973

Robert Mitchum's small-time Boston mobster is pressured to squeal on his bank-robbing gang in Peter Yates' flinty-eyed dissection of underworld codes and loyalties. No real glamour, just grubbiness.

Bring Me The Head Of Alfredo Garcia 1974

Warren Oates battles various lowlifes to claim the bounty on the titular bonce. For a full review of Sam Peckinpah's down 'n' dirty Mexican road movie, see page 113.

The Driver 1978

Bruce Dern's singleminded detective goes after Ryan O'Neal's taciturn getaway driver in a hardboiled thriller full of car chases and squealing tyres. Also influenced Nicolas Winding Refn's *Drive*.

Who'll Stop The Rain 1978

Michael Moriarty's Vietnam War correspondent smuggles heroin to wife Tuesday Weld and mate Nick Nolte back in America, forcing them on the lam. A criminally underseen thriller, soaked in disillusionment.



LONE LADY

Brie Larson plays Justine, the only female in the 13-person shootout.

SCENE SELECTION

(below) Director Ben Wheatley studies the storyboards.

DAY TWO PING-PONG & GUNS

Gun shots and hollers aren't the only din on the set of *Free Fire*. Yesterday, between set-ups and lunchtime, it sounded like the roof of the warehouse was about to come down, with sudden cheers punctuating a relentless tattoo of stamping and scuffling. Today *Total Film* is invited up a flight of stairs to see the origin of all this commotion: a massive man-cave replete with dart board and a circle of chairs surrounding a ping-pong table where a *highly* competitive tournament has been playing out for weeks.

Testosterone, it's safe to say, is not in short supply, though Larson has no quibbles about being the only female cast member. "The one thing I've really learned from all the men here is that every surface is a canvas to draw a penis on," she grins. "Women don't do that. We're not obsessed with drawing boobs everywhere. We're made to feel embarrassed that we have appendages to begin with. But men are just like, 'This is my junk.' And each man has a different line he won't cross. Some are like, 'Penis and balls, cool - but don't draw hair on the balls, that's taking it

too far.' Some won't have stuff coming out of the penis. They're all obsessed with it but they all have a line where they're like, 'No, I won't do that, because I'm a gentleman.'"

Still, given that rampant male ego is one of the key themes of *Free Fire*, such behaviour fits. "The only way they know to communicate is screaming at each other," notes Larson of the 12 angry men in the movie. "And the one woman, who's a little bit quieter, a little bit savvier, is sort of outsmarting them. That is an interesting concept."

The guys are not oblivious to this. They laugh at how they bonded on the first day by undergoing weapons training together, trying to out-cool each other as they fired their guns and took videos on their phones while they did it. They were, in fact, encouraged to take pride in their weapons, for each speaks of the man who wields it.

"I have an M1991A1 Colt, .45 single-action," says Hammer. "It was the designated military gun. It harkens back to Ord's military days."

"I have a revolver, Smith & Wesson," states Murphy. "You only get





six shots but they're more reliable." Smiley cuts in. "Mine's a 9mm Browning. Frank would have been a revolver guy, but with the semi-automatics he's found you're getting more bang for your buck. More bullets. When you're firing off, the weapon gives a proper growl."

"I have two guns – that tells you a lot – and lots of ammunition," says Copley. "Vern has this aggression, but he's not particularly good with a firearm."

'I HAVE TWO GUNS - THAT TELLS YOU A LOT'

SHARLTO COPLEY

Reynor grins. "I've got the .38 special. Snub-nosed pistol. It's got black electrical tape around the handle, which says something about this guy. The only pain in the arse about it is that it has five rounds so I'm constantly looking for ammunition."

"Mine's a colt 1911, one of the first semi-automatics in America," chips in Riley. "It's very loud, like my character Stevo. More importantly, it's the gun that Steve McQueen uses in *The Getaway*, which is cool."

And Larson? "Oh God, I feel like the only one who doesn't relate to their weapon," she winces. "I don't even know what it is. It's smallish. The moment I had it out, every guy was [adopts manly growl], 'Let me take a

look at that...' And they were opening it, shooting it... I barely knew how to hold it. I felt so stupid."

Not half as stupid as these macho men look when they're scrabbling in dirt and glass. For while there's a strong element of 'cool' to this film – dudes in flares and wide lapels firing off one-liners from potty mouths framed by all manner of facial fur – they're soon squealing and dying over a lousy case of money. Wheatley's repeatedly stated that *Free Fire* is his

FLARE-UP

Armie Hammer and his pals show off their classic '70s threads.

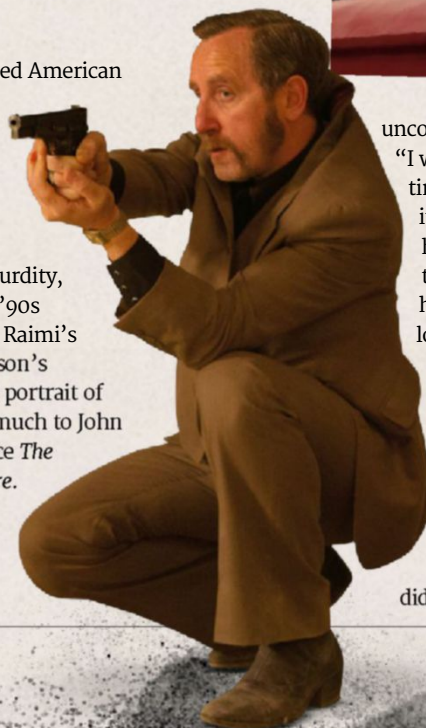
TAKE THE SHOT

(right) DoP Laurie Rose on set and (below) Michael Smiley as Frank.



love letter to the hardboiled American crime thrillers of the '70s (see boxout, page 85), and it even boasts Martin Scorsese as executive producer. But the escalation of madcap violence recalls, in its absurdity, such late-'80s and early-'90s splatstick classics as Sam Raimi's *Evil Dead 2* and Peter Jackson's *Braindead*. Its devastating portrait of greed, meanwhile, owes much to John Huston's 1948 masterpiece *The Treasure Of The Sierra Madre*.

It's hardly the most flattering view of men, and Wheatley is quick to assert that he's



uncomfortable with bloke-y behaviour.

"I work with the same crew all the time, and they're not macho so it doesn't get brash and nasty," he remarks. "And gender-wise, the crew's quite split. I think that's healthier. I'm not a big fan of locker room talk, even though I've got a filthy, sailor-mouth."

"Invariably, the stuff in my films that is the filthiest, Amy [Jump, wife and regular screenwriter] wrote." Wheatley grins. "I came so hard in your cousin's mouth I knocked all her rotten teeth out." I fucking didn't write that!"



Q&A

LADY KILLER

BRIE LARSON TALKS CASHEW NUTS AND CAPTAIN MARVEL...

Had you seen Ben Wheatley's other films before signing to *Free Fire*?

I'd seen *Sightseers*. It was the only one I could find, at first, and I was recommending it to everyone, going, "It's just amazing!" Then I saw the other films. He's so smart.

How is it working on an English film set?

The only thing lacking is the snacks. We have a whole truck of snacks in America. On the first day, one of the runners asked if they can get me anything and I said [*excitedly*], "Yeah, can I get some salted cashews and berries?" Their face was like [*slack-jawed*]. At the time I thought they were thinking, "Wow, what a great combination!" But they ran around for an hour-and-a-half then came back and said, "Er, we don't have that." I felt like such a diva.

You're sporting quite the outfit in this movie...

The '70s were pretty complicated and fly in their way. There's so much going on, so excessive. The tank top hardly matches this [*tugs at blouse*], with this [*tugs at blazer*]... I imagine if she's willing to put everything on the line to steal a meagre amount of money, she probably doesn't have much money, and she's splurged the last of it on this outfit to look presentable. Or it's the one thing in her closet that makes her look expensive... and it's not that expensive!

You have some big movies on the horizon – *Kong: Skull Island* and *Captain Marvel*...

Some of my favourite movies are big movies. I could just watch the director's cuts of *Lord Of The Rings* on repeat for the rest of my life. I want to find the best way to express the human condition and get it to as many people as possible. Wherever that takes me is cool.

Do you feel a responsibility being the first female Marvel superhero to lead a movie?

I feel a great responsibility. I have so many conversations with fans about the universe and this character in particular. I'm grateful for social media for that, actually – it's such a great way to connect with people, to understand what it is they love about this character, what is it they hope to see. Where this character's at in the comic books is such an inspiring space, right now. I'm so grateful to be part of it. JG

DAY THREE WOUNDS & WORLD VIEW

"Go for the case. You're a bird, they're not gonna shoot a bird," urges Vernon, only for Justine to be shot the moment she staggers into the open. "Shit, I'm sorry, I'm sorry!" shouts shooter Harry, the words catching in his throat when Justine cries "You little asshole!" and shoots him right back. The action is caught by Rose's low-slung camera as it dollies in *fast* – only a blitzkrieg of crash zooms, whip pans and machine-gun cuts can hope to keep pace with the action of this Looney Tunes *Reservoir Dogs*.

A cry of "Cut" rings through the acrid atmosphere, and Smiley wanders over to *Total Film*. "Finger my wound," he implores, deadpan.

Murphy, covered in dust, smiles. "You realise why action stars are paid so much. You have to come out of your trailer after having your lasagne and go, 'Right, I have to go 100 per cent now.' You're straight into gunfire, bleeding and life or death."

"Ben has a good sense of humour – so dark," says Hammer, stroking his luxuriant beard. "He's so calm but, technically, he's one of the most proficient directors I've ever seen, and like Fincher, he puts in an exorbitant amount of work."

Also like Fincher, Wheatley's films offer a bleak world view. His sense of humour is blacker than pitch – John Denver's saccharine 'Annie's Song' plays over an especially nihilistic moment because "it's the worst music to listen to while you're bleeding out" – and his six movies to date are

populated with double-dealing, thieving, murderous lowlifes who plummet into chaos and carnage.

"My worldview probably looks reasonably optimistic now, compared to what's going on," he points out when *Total Film* catches up with him a year-and-a-half later, months after Brexit and weeks before the inauguration of Donald Trump. "You can't write anything as insane as the news. But no, I'm not that optimistic. I know some people have lives which are great and nothing bad ever happens to them – they're crying aged 90, when their parents die, or something like that – and that's great. But it's not my experience of life. We're always in complete denial about how bad things are. We're in denial even about our own deaths, you know?"

Such denial is impossible for his characters, for Death laughs in their faces at every turn. Each demise is painfully real and yet often scabrously funny, and it's this juxtaposition of legitimacy and absurdity that gives Wheatley's movies their magic flavour. It's what tempted the stellar casts of *High-Rise* and *Free Fire*, and it's why Martin Scorsese put his name to the movie before it started shooting.

"He loved it, which was a massive relief," says Wheatley. "I mean, what would we have done if he didn't... go home and re-cut the whole thing?" Then out bubbles that midnight black humour. "Or maybe kill ourselves?"

FREE FIRE OPENS ON 31 MARCH.





From *Sons Of Anarchy* to *Pacific Rim*, **CHARLIE HUNNAM** has steadily climbed the Hollywood ranks. But with *The Lost City Of Z* and *King Arthur: Legend Of The Sword*, this British actor is becoming an A-list star by returning to his roots...

WORDS JAMES MOTTRAM

CHARLIE HUNNAM





Another rainy day in Los Angeles," sighs Charlie Hunnam, wistfully looking at the grey cloud front blocking out the traditionally blue California skies. "It's been raining

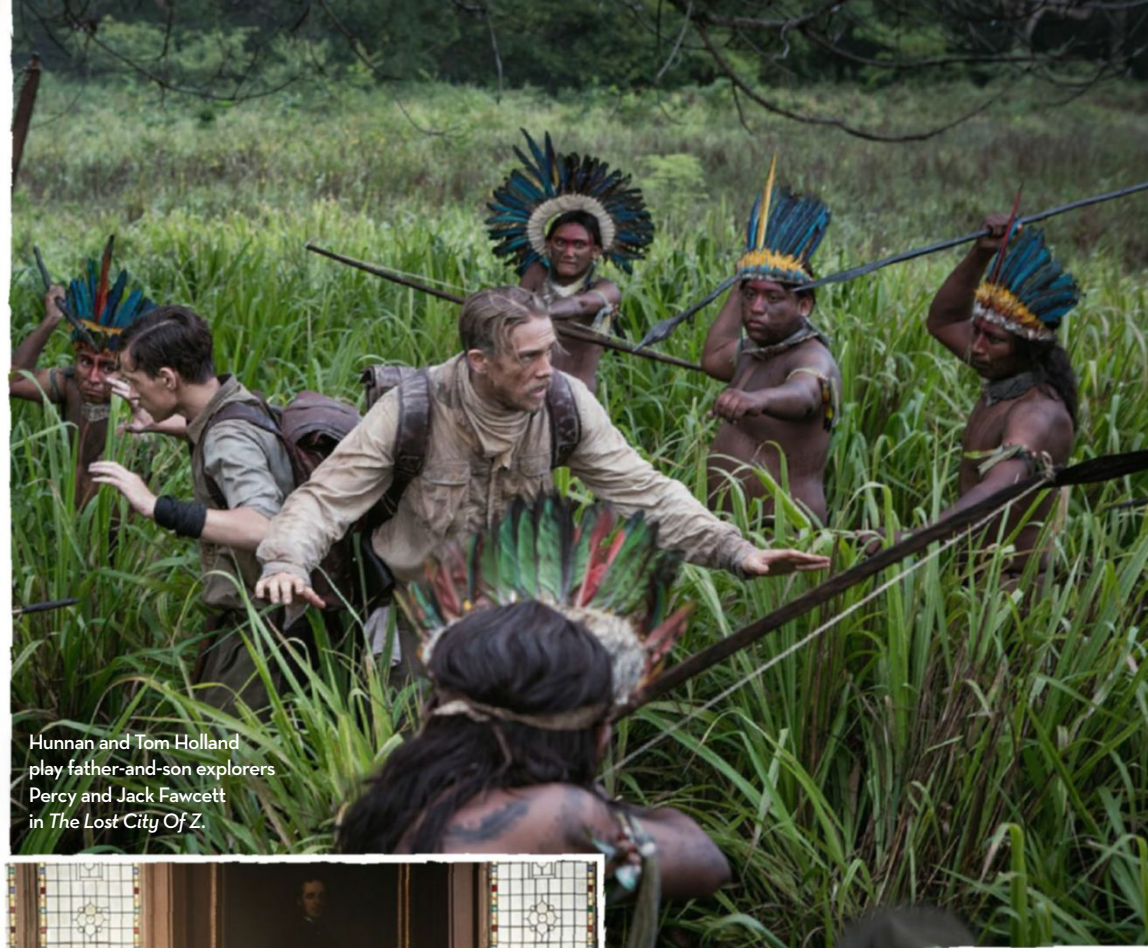
pretty much consistently for the last few weeks, which is much needed. A nice change from the monopoly of sunshine every day! I grew up for most of my childhood in the Lake District, where it rained about 200 days of the year, so I'm not afraid of a rainy day."

Despite this yearning for our inclement weather, and an accent that hasn't lost its Anglo-origins, it can be easy to forget the 36-year-old Hunnam is English. Blue eyes, blond hair, ripped body – he could easily pass for a Californian surfer. And he's been living in LA since 1998, "my base my whole adult life". What's more, his career-making role as the tattoo-clad, Harley-riding Jackson 'Jax' Teller, the president of an outlaw biker club in FX television show *Sons Of Anarchy*, is as American as stars and stripes.

Yet Hunnam hasn't forgotten his origins. Born in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and raised in Cumbria by his mother Jane after his parents divorced, of late he's been hankering after a return to the UK. "I'd been so married to Los Angeles for years while I was doing the TV show, [it] didn't really afford me much opportunity to travel back to England," he explains. "And I'd been really yearning to spend some time back home and spend a bit more time with my family – I'd been putting a lot of energy into that."

Hunnam even began discussing the idea with his long-term girlfriend, jewellery designer Morgana McNelis, that maybe they could rent a flat in London "and just see what life would feel like back in England". And then, as luck would have it, not one but two films brought him back to Britain, one about a legend, the other about a legend-hunter.

Before we get to see Hunnam playing the lead in Guy Ritchie's mythmaking blockbuster *King Arthur: Legend Of The Sword*, he takes on the very real explorer Lt. Colonel Percy Fawcett in James Gray's superlative *The Lost City Of Z*. A British adventurer



Hunnam and Tom Holland play father-and-son explorers Percy and Jack Fawcett in *The Lost City Of Z*.



ABOVE
Laying the groundwork for Fawcett's real-life Amazon expedition.

who undertook several groundbreaking trips to the Amazon in the early 1900s, Fawcett became obsessed with finding the remains of an indigenous civilisation that resided, he believed, in the jungles of Brazil.

Though partly shot in Belfast, it also meant spending months in Colombia, which doubled for the Brazilian rainforests. "You can never relax when you're in that environment," he says. "It's not like being in a forest in Europe where it's pretty benign in terms of the things that can really harm you. It's just a multitude of things all over the place that are pretty deadly, from plants to insects to larger animals. We were venturing pretty far into the jungle. It was an extraordinary experience."

Every day, the crew would travel by boat up river then trek inland to the locations. Unable to carry much equipment, fold-out chairs were something they had to leave behind. "Obviously the temptation after 14 hours on your feet is to try to find somewhere to sit down, but that's just not what you want to do in the jungle.

Between the ants and the spiders and scorpions and snakes and deadly frogs, you've got to be on your toes." Several crew members were bitten by snakes.

"I got off lightly," he says, with just a couple of insect encounters to report. He recalls one scene where he had to fall to the ground. "A scorpion was in the path where I put my hand down and it ran and hit my wrist and then changed its course, ran up the side of my hand, and along my finger. I just froze and kept on doing the scene. It was a fairly common scorpion and they had the anti-venom, but if I had been bitten and didn't have the anti-venom, it was definitely deadly."

While Hunnam took over a role originally mooted for Brad Pitt, and later Benedict Cumberbatch, he immediately warmed to the character. "I think Fawcett was one of those rare individuals who had the courage and discipline and selfishness to put his internal responsibility to the forefront. And both James and I could really relate to that. It's not like we're going off into the jungle for four years at a time, but when we go away and work, both of us have had the experience that it is incredibly monopolising of our time."

'IT'S LIKE LORD OF THE RINGS MEETS LOCK, STOCK... IF YOU CAN IMAGINE THAT'
— CHARLIE HUNNAM —

CHARLIE HUNNAM



officially a scrap metal dealer, has been described by his son as everything from “entrepreneurial” to “a career-long criminal” in the past – though coming from a background where calling the police was a big no-no under any circumstances doesn’t seem to have affected Hunnam adversely.

Growing up, he was attending Cumbria College of Art and Design, studying film theory and history and performing arts, when he was talent-spotted. “I think it was 1997, Christmas Eve in a J.D. Sports in Newcastle and I was drunk and Christmas shopping and buying some shoes for my brother,” he grins. In the same shop was a production manager for popular kids’ show *Byker Grove*. “I was clowning around and I blew her a kiss and she came over and introduced herself.”

Before long, Hunnam came in, did an audition and wound up on three episodes. Within a year, he was on Russell T. Davies’ groundbreaking show *Queer As Folk*, and by the early 2000s he was showing his range, from playing the lead in Charles Dickens adaptation *Nicholas Nickleby* to working with acclaimed directors such as Anthony Minghella (*Cold Mountain*) and Alfonso Cuarón (*Children Of Men*). Still, it was *Sons Of Anarchy* that truly propelled him skywards.

“That was my true education in acting, filmmaking and storytelling – and it really changed my life,” he reflects. “I was a working actor, I was able to work with good directors and make films I really believed in. But the opportunities were fairly sporadic and sometimes few and far between. And *Sons* changed all of that. I was in an exponentially better position by the time I finished that show than I was at the beginning. I grew in confidence.”

Now that’s something Hunnam isn’t lacking. He has several projects on the go that he’s either written or helped produce, and has just wrapped *Papillon*, a return to the Henri Charrière prison-escape novel that inspired the 1973 film with Dustin Hoffman and Steve McQueen (“The idea of re-telling such a classic was a bit terrifying,” he admits). Just as long as he keeps that work-life balance in check...

THE LOST CITY OF Z OPENS ON 24 MARCH.
KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD
OPENS ON 12 MAY.

Already a divorcée, after his three-year marriage to actress Katharine Towne ended in 2002, Hunnam admits that his all-in approach to filmmaking requires “us being very selfish and neglecting other areas of our lives that could be quite painful and cause a lot of wreckage to the personal life”. Echoing Fawcett, who left behind his wife (played by Sienna Miller) and children, Hunnam delved so deep into his character that he stopped speaking to McNelis – his partner for 11 years – for months.

So far, that work/life balance hasn’t been easy. “I have an incredibly understanding girlfriend who is requiring more and more as we get older that I figure out a way to balance these things a little better. I’ve gotten off pretty easily so far, with being able to just disappear and be completely selfish and singular in my focus, but if we’re going to start talking about having children and getting married then I’m going to have to figure out a way to balance that a little bit more effectively.”

At least the shoot for *King Arthur* didn’t take him to a remote corner of the world, though don’t think that means it won’t be exotic. “It’s a little bit like *Lord Of The Rings* meets *Lock, Stock And Two Smoking Barrels*,” he explains. “If you can imagine those two worlds colliding, you have a little bit of a flavour of what Guy’s created with this one. I think it was a very difficult tone to strike and I think he spent a lot of

TOP
Camelot goes Cockney, as Hunnam stars in Guy Ritchie’s *King Arthur: Legend Of The Sword*.

BELOW
The Geordie-born actor’s breakout role, as *Sons Of Anarchy*’s Jax Teller.

time in the editing room finessing that tone so it feels consistent to the film.”

The trailer certainly speaks to this as Hunnam faces evil-looking armies, giant mammoths and mega-snakes. “There is somewhat of a re-imagining in there,” he concedes. “But Guy also felt a responsibility to the material. He’s a big fan of that legend. I think it’s a nice marriage of some really original stuff and some of the stuff you would hope to see in a telling of *King Arthur*.”

While Hunnam is no stranger to blockbusters – he played the hotshot pilot in Guillermo del Toro’s *Pacific Rim* – Ritchie’s film should propel him into that rarefied league of leading males able to shoulder a studio movie single-handedly. Moreover, it shows there was no career fallout after Hunnam pulled out of Sam Taylor-Johnson’s adaptation of E.L. James’ *Fifty Shades Of Grey*.

Dubbing it “the worst professional experience” of his life, he dropped the film because he couldn’t face flying from the set of *Sons Of Anarchy* directly to Vancouver to play BDSM-loving billionaire Christian Grey. With a commitment to Guillermo del Toro’s *Crimson Peak* straight after the *Fifty Shades* shoot, he simply wasn’t up for this emotionally draining bottleneck. Other rumours circulated that he had problems with the script or simply wasn’t ready for stardom.

Hunnam later revealed that his father Billy had passed away during this period, which doubtless accounts for his fragility. Often labelled a Newcastle gangster, the late Billy,



MAKING OF

92

SUPER TROOPERS

A screenwriter who went to Iraq. A director who shot *Narcos*. A cast topped by Marvel/DC stars Nicholas Hoult and Henry Cavill. And Netflix releasing it. **SAND CASTLE** isn't your average American war movie. Total Film stands to attention. 🇺🇸

WORDS JAMES MOTTRAM

MAKING OF

There aren't many soldiers who get to turn their experiences into cinema. John Huston, William Wyler and John Ford all served in World War Two. Clint Eastwood was drafted during the Korean War, though avoided combat. Most famously, Oliver Stone ploughed his time in the Vietnam War into his Oscar-winning *Platoon*. It was this that caught the attention of Chris Roessner. Having joined the US military in July 2001, shortly before the 9/11 attacks, this Ohio native was stationed in Iraq in 2003 as part of a Civil Affairs unit.

One night, Roessner – then only 18 – was on duty in Saddam Hussein's now-ransacked palace. Alone in this solid gold-and-marble residence – “super eerie and super creepy” he remembers – to pass the time, he put on a DVD of *Platoon* on his laptop. “I watched *Platoon* at 3am and it finishes as the sun is coming up,” he says, “as all the other soldiers are waking up to go on their missions.” He was blown away. “It was so incredibly personal. I didn't know you could make films like that. It was so deeply, deeply personal to Oliver Stone's experience.”

Roessner already had filmic ambitions; despite a father, mother, uncle and grandfather in the military, he was only in the army to save enough money to go to film school. But that night, watching Stone's opus, he resolved to pour his own experiences into a war film. “It still took me another eight years to sit down and try it,” he laughs. Beginning the screenplay in his final year at USC film school, the result is *Sand Castle* – a Netflix-released feature set during the Iraq War that most certainly isn't a flag-waving, patriotic, guns 'n' ammo fest.

Seen through the eyes of one shit-scared grunt, Private Matt Ocre (played by Nicholas Hoult), Roessner's own time trying to win over the hearts and minds of the locals fed straight into Ocre's Iraq nightmare. “It's not a typical character for an American war movie, where you have a hero journey,” says director Fernando Coimbra. “I really liked this character. He has no initial motivation to be there; he doesn't want to kill people or have revenge for 9/11. He was in the army because he wanted to pay for college.”

Brazilian-born Coimbra came onto the project off the back of 2013 kidnap



DESERT DUTY

On location in Jordan, which doubled for Iraq.

drama *A Wolf At The Door* and directing episodes of the hit Pablo Escobar TV series *Narcos*. When *Total Film* catches up with Hoult, the 27-year-old Brit is bleary-eyed, having just binged the entire series of *Narcos* the night before. “I sent him an e-mail and said, ‘Damn, your episodes of *Narcos* are really good!’” he grins. “[Fernando's] always trying to make the most sense out of scripts. There can be tendencies in

action films to have things explode for no reason – and it may not make sense fully. He's very up on all those things.”

Hoult read *Sand Castle* after it was put on the Black List of the best unproduced scripts in Hollywood. Never having played a soldier before – if you discount his Greek warrior in *Clash Of The Titans* – the appeal was obvious. “It was a very small, intimate war film, which I liked,” he adds. “It was [about] guys who were



under-prepared for what they were going into and were hung out to dry a little bit, and yet get this bee in their bonnet about completing the mission and doing their duty. They do really care and their hearts are in the right place, and they do want to help.”

In the film, Ocre’s unit is sent to Baqubah to repair a water-pumping station, damaged by US bombs.

As Roessner willingly admits, it was a fictionalised aspect of his journey – a narrative device used to sum up his mental state in Iraq. “When you spend a year at war, you don’t get any kind of closure whatsoever,” he says. “You get the opposite. You show up, thinking that you’re going to solve things, and

PRIVATE MISSION
Nicholas Hoult plays
a young soldier
loosely based on
Chris Roessner’s own
Iraq War experiences.

you leave with more questions than you have answers. You can’t dramatise that feeling in a two-hour film.”

Coimbra compares the scenario to the classical Greek myth of Sisyphus – the king who was forced for all eternity to push a boulder up a hill only for it to roll back down again. “The soldier has this job; they train you to fix something, to accomplish something, that’s never going to be accomplished,” he says, noting that the

film hints at wider issues. “You realise this war is very much about corporate interests... later some international private company will come and handle the water problem.”

While this is very much buried in the subtext of *Sand Castle*, the sense of futility in being on the ground in Iraq is well captured too. Along with Enzo (Neil Brown Jr.), Chutsky (Glen Powell) and Burton (Beau Knapp), and their commanding officer Sgt. Harper (Logan Marshall-Green), Ocre comes into contact with Captain Syverson (Henry Cavill). A battle-weary special forces soldier in charge of operations in Baqubah, he’s already spent months in this hot-spot peppered with insurgent activity.

**‘WHEN YOU SPEND A YEAR AT WAR,
YOU DON’T GET ANY KIND OF CLOSURE.
YOU GET THE OPPOSITE’** CHRIS ROESSNER

MAKING OF

For an actor famed for playing the Man of Steel, Cavill looks even more beefed-up on screen in *Sand Castle* than he does as Superman. Think the almost impregnable Robert Duvall in *Apocalypse Now*, destined to leave the Vietnam War without a scratch. “The story is told from Nic Hoult’s character’s perspective and so when you see this guy, it’s supposed to give the impression of, ‘Wow, it looks like bullets don’t touch this man!’” says Cavill. “He’s got that nature about him. And I suppose that’s more of a personality than anything actually mythical and invulnerable.”

Arriving on Cavill’s slate in between *Batman v Superman: Dawn Of Justice* and the upcoming *Justice League*, the appeal of the role is evident. “It was definitely to do something different,” he says (in between attempts to quieten down his excitable dog). “I wanted to play a character that I had some real input into and I could play with and there was no box to keep him within. He could essentially do anything, because he’s fictional. I just relished the idea of creating this guy who’s hopefully interesting to an audience.”

With both his own brothers and close friends in the armed forces, Cavill, 33, drew from their experiences. “I worked closely with a friend of mine to build a character who’s interesting,” he says, stressing he wanted to show “a heavy contrast” to the Civil Affairs team that Ocre belongs to. “I did a lot of work with them to try and refine my movements and how one moves through a house and clears rooms,”

'CAVILL IS BRUTAL AND COLD, BUT SOMETIMES IRONIC AND FUNNY'

FERNANDO COIMBRA

he says. “They’re tough guys. Some people call them ‘door-kickers’, because they have to put a lot of weight behind knocking a door down and bursting through a house.”

In Coimbra’s eyes, it was vital Cavill dropped the superhero persona to play a character as cynical as Syverson. “Henry – he’s very related now to the Superman character, so we

needed to change him not only visually but his whole performance.”

Coimbra compares Cavill to a rather different iconic American hero. “At the end, he looks like a cowboy, like John Wayne. He’s really brutal and cold, but sometimes he’s ironic and funny. That’s what we were looking for.”

While Cavill had his own outside-the-shoot help, so did Logan Marshall-Green. Shortly before shooting *Sand Castle*, the 40-year-old *Prometheus* actor worked with Oliver Stone on *Snowden* and didn’t waste a second quizzing him about his time as a soldier. “I had quite an ace up my sleeve,” he grins. “I asked him, ‘What is the one thing that narrative film-cinema doesn’t achieve when it comes to war? What is that difference?’ And he said the one thing that no-one gets right is the sound of war. I just found that to be incredibly astute and haunting.”

With the film shooting in Jordan – freezing at night, roasting in the day – it was no picnic. His first time in the Middle East, Hoult took on *Sand Castle* not long after his gruelling six-month shoot in Namibia for *Mad Max: Fury Road*. “Honestly, I don’t know what it is with me!” he chuckles. “I’m always in some far-flung place wondering how I got there. They’re always very beautiful and I have fun on the films, but I may have to start talking to my agents about finding a nice job in the Caribbean!”

This time, he was put through a three-day boot camp to prep. “I’ve heard about boot camps where people have literally been broken, and almost not able to do the film because it was so intense. This wasn’t like that,” he says. Playing soldiers whose primary role it was to interact with the locals, this go-easy approach made sense. “It wasn’t like we were trained to be Navy Seals. A lot of it was learning the



ABOVE
The actors were taught close-quarters battle tactics.

LEFT
Director Fernando Coimbra didn’t want docu-style footage.

lingo, the formations of how you would move, where you’d be looking, how you carry your gun, all those things, which take a long time.”

In particular, Hoult and his co-stars were tutored in CQB (close-quarters battle) tactics, training at a Kill House – a simulated environment on a military base where soldiers are taught how to engage in close combat. “When you’re doing CQB stuff, you’re not running a lot of the time,” says Hoult. “It’s a fast walk, with your weapon up, but it’s amazing how tiring it is. It’s a different kind of fitness to anything I’ve experienced before. I’ve had to be in shape for films – and I’m not a terribly unfit person – but I was amazed.”

On set, Roessner was on hand to pass on vital intel. Hoult read his journal from when he was in Iraq. “Not that I keep a journal but if I did, I don’t think I could ever stomach letting somebody read through it, particularly when it was the old me. Even when he was 19, he





was really figuring out who he was and where he stood in the world and his feelings about war." Likewise, when Marshall-Green arrived in Amman, "I went straight for Chris and asked him as much as I could about him."

While *Sand Castle* doesn't skimp on the spectacular – notably in the Baghdad prologue when Ocre's unit are caught in a hotel-set fire-fight – the script is "more about mistakes than missions", says Marshall-Green. "Obviously it goes without saying, the Iraq War was not just one big mistake in its purpose – and this is just my opinion – but it was a multitude of many other administrative and field mistakes, on and off the battlefield. Mistakes are made in war. Our squad is a little microcosm of it."

Unlike other recent combat movies, such as *Lone Survivor*, *The Kingdom* and *Jarhead*, *Sand Castle* moves away

from the almost-accepted jagged hand-held style. "A lot of war movies about the Iraq War try to pretend that they are documentary," Coimbra says. Preferring long takes, rather than frenzied cuts, he wanted to approach war in the way Francis Ford Coppola did in *Apocalypse Now*. "That's a very psychological story. It's not about a war in a normal way. It's about the psychological processes of the character [played by Martin Sheen]."

While Ang Lee's *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk* – due this month – deals with post-traumatic stress disorder and patriotic homecomings, *Sand Castle* tries a different tack, getting in the heads of the grunts on the ground. "I never approached it as an anti-war movie," says Cavill. "It's showing some of the other realities of war. It shows a daily grind, which isn't the excitement – which really leads towards a difficult psychological state for a lot of the soldiers out there."



ABOVE
Eager to take on a non-Superman challenge, Henry Cavill plays a cynical special forces soldier.

After six years in the military, Roessner made it back in one piece – both physically and mentally – but he knows he'll never be free of what he saw. "It's always unexpected things that creep up on you. The way you feel when you get home, how you feel out of place; the way that the people you'd thought would live through Iraq maybe didn't and the people you thought would be the first to bite it turn out to be Medal of Honor winners. It really confuses your sense of order."

Little wonder *Sand Castle* was seemingly so cathartic.

SAND CASTLE PREMIERES ON NETFLIX ON 14 APRIL.

WORDS JANE CROWTHER PORTRAITS FRED MEYLAN



I WASN'T SHOWING
WHO I WAS. I WAS
GETTING INTO THE
MACHINE OF IT. BUT
I DON'T REGRET IT.
IT'S SWITCHED ME ON



GEMMA ARTERTON

She became a Bond girl straight out of RADA and starred in a run of Hollywood blockbusters. But Gemma Arterton rebelled against being just 'the girlfriend' and took artistic risks to recalibrate a career that now balances theatre with film, acting with producing. Total Film meets the star of new period drama *Their Finest*...





S

he's strong, but in a quiet way," says Gemma Arterton when describing her character in her latest film, *Their Finest*, over a cup of tea in a Covent Garden hotel. "There's a very delicate progression that she makes and quite an honest one." The Gravesend native might well be describing her own carefully navigated development over the last decade, from pin-up ingenue to respected, prolific actor who is vocal about her disapproval of poor female roles in Hollywood movies, proactive in forming her own destiny and unpretentious in her presentation of her 'brand'.

Arterton has always had a 'can-do' attitude in all the times *Total Film* has caught up with her on film sets and promotional junkets over the years; articulate, direct, shrewd and pragmatic. Though in the middle of a production as lead in challenging play *Saint Joan* at The Donmar Warehouse (for which she happily chopped her locks to a gamine boy-cut), she makes time to run around the corner

from the theatre, pre curtain-up, to meet *TF*. Turning up alone, wearing not a scrap of make-up, some sturdy boots and a warm parka on this freezing afternoon, she's as astonishingly movie star beautiful in the flesh as she looks on-screen.

But in person, chatting to her feels like catching up with a friend. Though she admits that doing publicity "is like a performance", Arterton is immediately warm, engaging, candid – decidedly un-starry. When discussing her latest role as a Welsh scriptwriter working on a propaganda film during WW2 in *Their Finest*, she recoils at the idea that she would keep her accent up between takes ("No, I hate that. I would never inflict that on everyone!") and talks more about the great work of her co-stars and director than her own. But then, Arterton has learnt through trial and error that the way to drive her career the way she wants to go is to work with filmmakers and actors she admires rather than chase stardom. Having been left disappointed by her blockbuster experiences – and female representation – in films such as *Prince Of Persia* and *Clash Of The Titans*, she fought against the system to play capable, bright women in independent, small films such as *The Disappearance Of Alice Creed*, *Byzantium* and *The Voices*, and on stage in productions of *The Duchess Of Malfi*, *Made In Dagenham* and *Nell Gwynn*.

While she's always seemed self-assured, now – having just turned 31 (her birthday is days away from when we meet) – Arterton radiates the confidence of a woman who is a power player in her own

right, thanks to diversifying her creative output and refusing to be typecast or belittled based on her gender. "I wanted to go on the Women's March on Saturday," she bemoans, pouring her green tea into a dainty cup. "But I couldn't because I was doing *Joan* twice. I thought, 'I should have just gone in my costume and walked down as Joan of Arc.' To my friend, I said, 'I wish I'd been there.' She said, 'You're doing it every night.'"

What sort of films did you watch growing up?

I never watched films when I was a kid. I grew up in a household of women. We just watched musicals, that was it. So I didn't know anything about cinema, really, until I was 16 and I went to a theatre college. We were asked to watch certain films. I remember, they gave me some Aronofsky and Lars von Trier and Haneke. I was like, "Wow. This is my type of stuff."

Their Finest is such a warm, cosy film – was that how it felt working on it?

What a joyful experience it was to work with director Lone [Scherfig]. She really loves actors and has such a delicate touch. What she's managed to achieve with this film is something quite unique, tonally. This is a comedy and a drama and a romance and a period film – she's tied them together. The whole thing was such a great experience. It was a real joy from start to finish. I think that feeling that you get from watching the film was what we were feeling when we were making it. It was just a real, loving, collective feeling. Even though I'm leading it, I don't feel like I am. I felt I was very much amongst a big group. I like working in that way. I think it allows for that female protagonist character to be more nuanced and not so kind of "rah!", which I loved.

Did you get a kick from creating a movie within the movie?

That was actually one of the biggest joys of making this film – that film within the film. But I think the trickiest part was showing them making a period film – the fact that it was a different type of crew – the way they would have made films then was more rock 'n' roll, it was smaller crews. And everyone wearing suits on a film set, which is such a lovely thing.

And the issues in *Their Finest* are still pertinent – women being paid less than male colleagues and being brought in to write less valued work, 'the slop'...

Yes, I think [my character is] just an innate feminist. [Producer] Stephen Woolley gave



TRUE LIES
Arterton plays a WW2
propaganda writer in the
upcoming *Their Finest*.



me this book when I was doing *Made In Dagenham* [on the stage]. It's called *A Woman's Place*, about the end of the 19th Century up until the 1970s – historical events in Britain that influenced the second wave of feminism. The Second World War was one of the biggest activators, because women were all of a sudden put in these positions of power and need. I think we make a lot of films in that era because it was such an amazing time historically, for men and for women – but particularly for women. We've got Christopher Nolan's film coming out about Dunkirk. But it's so interesting to see [that event] from the women's point of view, and what it was like back home.

You've spoken in the past about how you became dissatisfied doing Hollywood blockbusters and started playing more meaningful roles – does that make you feel responsible for what you choose now?

Yeah. I'm so happy with where I am right now. I'm creating my own work.

I DO FEEL A RESPONSIBILITY. BUT I LIKE BEING FLIPPANT AS WELL

I'm writing. I've got about six projects that I'm working on, at the same time as doing my theatre work, which is so important to me. I've just made a film that I've produced. Right now, I feel I'm doing the films that I want to do, that I would go to see, or films that would move me, or that they've got the right tone. I do feel a responsibility. But at the same time, I like being quite flippant as well. My taste

is not for everybody. I tend to get behind things that maybe aren't quite so fashionable. So that's the battle I have to fight. But I want to make films. It's not just about the role I play

within it. I just want to make a good film that means something. I read scripts and think, "She's just the girlfriend. I'll give that one a miss." Before, I probably wouldn't have thought in that way.

Is producing an important part of that?

Yes – I've always had that bug inside me. That's why I was quite dissatisfied before because I knew there was so much that I could do, that I wasn't being given the

opportunity to do. I love working with other writers and collaborating. Sometimes, as an actor, it can be quite frustrating, because you're just brought in at the last minute to speak the lines. I've always wanted more. I think that comes from working in the theatre where it is a collective. The work that I'm producing is the stuff that's really me. I think the goal would probably be to shine a light on women, whether they be good, bad, likeable, not likeable, whatever that may be – just to give them time for their story to be seen and heard.

Did you feel typecast when you set out?

At first. Now, I'm like, "I'm not being typecast at all." I think I can do anything. I can do comedy. I can do drama. I can do romance. The thing that was inhibiting at first is that people want to put you in a... you know, a certain young actress kind of thing. I think you have to go along with that for a bit.

Let's go back to the start of your career – when you got roles in *St. Trinian's*, *Quantum Of Solace* and TV series *Tess*, straight out of drama school...

It's so funny that you mention *Tess*, because I actually see *Tess* as the important

job there. As much as I adored making the Bond film, I just see it as a thrill. It was something that I just did. Whereas *Tess* was really an important piece of work for me. There is a side to me that is quite flippant. So I'll just do something for shits and giggles and for a laugh. Obviously, I will always be known as a Bond girl, which is fine, but it does stay with you.

Would you do Bond now?

I don't know if I would do those kinds of films now. It was such a great, great time, I loved working with Barbara Broccoli. And I was just really flattered to be asked. I never thought I'd get that far in a million years. I went into the audition thinking... I pissed about a little bit. I thought it was a laugh, like, "Ooh, I'm going up for a Bond film. I won't actually get it." [laughs]

It was really weird, because I was doing little bits of theatre, which were obviously really important to me, but no one saw it. And then *Tess*, and then the Bond film, and then *Prince Of Persia*. It was like all the different things you could possibly do in the space of two years.

I've only been working 10 years, but for me, the beginning of my career was the most formative. I learned a lot about me, who I am, what I like doing and what I don't like doing. When I was a student, the films and the filmmakers that I loved, are completely not what I've done. I loved independent foreign film. That was always there in me, going, "Why aren't you doing that? Why aren't you working with these people? Because that's you. That's really who you are." What I was doing was not showing who I was. I was just going along with it, getting into the machine of it. But I don't regret it, because it switched me on. I think that's all informing what I'm doing now. It's just been a bit of a slog to recalibrate.

One film that was key to that recalibration was *The Disappearance Of Alice Creed*. Was it a gamble to do a film like that after getting your foot in the Hollywood door?

It was literally just after I'd finished *Prince Of Persia*, and I think I needed to do it. It was like going to therapy, or shouting into a pillow, or punching a punch bag. It was like that. For me, I'd read the script, and I just had a feeling about it. I met the director, who had never done anything before, and just went, "Yeah, I'm gonna do

it." It felt right. It was made for nothing. I got paid nothing for it. Everyone always goes, "That must have been really hard to shoot." And it was, but I loved it. I like working hard and I like really intense situations. But in a way... sometimes I think some of the other films I've done have been more of a risk, because more people see them. [laughs] Nobody saw *Alice Creed*, unfortunately. But I'd rather everyone saw that film than *Runner Runner*. Actually, I see those sort of films as more risky than these tiny films that I feel passionate about.

Do you feel like it became a turning point for you?

Yes. I was going down this very commercial route. It was snowballing and I was like, "Oh my God, I'm not happy with the way my career is going." I think it really did me favours. People perceive you in the way that they perceive you. You put yourself in a glossy movie, they'll see you in that way. So I think that spun things on its head a bit and that was great.

Byzantium was another off-kilter choice of yours...

It's a real Marmite film but I love it. Moira Buffini, who wrote the adaptation of *Tamara Drewe*, wrote it and we got on really well. This was her first

original screenplay, she sent me the script and it was really bleak and not at all vampire-y. It was a psychological drama, more about this daughter talking to a psychologist about her mother being a vampire, and the mother being a prostitute, and how those two things coincide. It was a really interesting film. Then [director] Neil [Jordan] got the script and was like, "We need to make this into a vampire movie." So it totally changed to the point where I was almost not going to do it because I would have loved to have made that original film. But then it turned into something else, which was also great and became sort of epic and mythical and feminist and also beautifully shot.

That stunning waterfall scene...

It's amazing. I was dead chuffed when that happened. I was like, "This is cool!" There's some really great shots in it. The DP was Sean Bobbitt, who shot *Hunger* and *Shame* and he's really amazing. Neil obviously loves imagery. We did dye the whole waterfall red. And I had to go under

ALICE CREED WAS LIKE GOING TO THERAPY. I NEEDED IT

FIVE STAR TURNS

ST. TRINIAN'S 2007

A modern-day update of the cartoon about a riotous bunch of schoolgirls, a black-bobbed Arterton made an immediate impact as domineering head girl, Kelly Jones.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF ALICE CREED 2009

Handcuffed naked to a bed, Arterton bared her soul as the victim of an abduction in this controversial kidnap drama. "It's not a pretty film," she said. "That's why I wanted to do it."

BYZANTIUM 2012

Post her so-so Hollywood sojourn, Arterton sizzled in this stylish seaside vampire yarn as single mother Clara - "a woman who sells her body and also ends up killing people".

THE VOICES 2014

Offered the leading lady for this bizarre comedy, Arterton chose instead to play a decapitated talking head in a fridge. "I just wanted to be a bit silly," she said.

THE GIRL WITH ALL THE GIFTS 2016

A decade on from *St. Trinian's*, Arterton turned 30 and gave one of her most mature turns - this time as a schoolteacher - in this dystopian zombie thriller. **JM**





it in February, and it was like brain-freeze! I'd only be under there for seven seconds. It was really physical – I got to do loads of stunt work in it, and bite Tom Hollander!

You dabbled in blockbusters again with *Hansel And Gretel* and *Runner Runner* before coming back with a smaller film in *Song For Marion*...

I read the script when I was shooting *Hansel And Gretel*, and was in tears, and I thought I had to do it. And when we were shooting it even more so. You've got someone like Terence Stamp doing an amazing job and Vanessa [Redgrave] – and they just make it happen. It was quite emotional. When Vanessa sang 'True Colours', I remember the director, Paul [Andrew Williams], had to break for lunch early because he couldn't take it.

You followed that with another Marmite film, *The Voices*. Why did you want to do that project?

When I met [director] Marjane [Satrapi], we both went, "We're supposed to work together forever." She's got the same taste. She's a visual person, obviously, and she's also very funny – in a grotesque, vulgar way, which is how I like my comedy. She's definitely not a commercial director, and that's what I loved about her. I loved that film – I think it's a really, really clever film. Obviously it's very controversial. But films should be controversial sometimes. Marjane and I are developing a film together that we're writing. I was talking to her just now about it. She just cracks me up. And she's unfazed by all the Hollywood stuff. She lives in Paris, and she smokes loads of cigarettes. She doesn't give a fuck about what anyone else thinks. She wants to make what she wants to make, and if you don't like it, then you can sod off.

It's interesting to note that while you were battling against being typecast, so was your co-star, Ryan Reynolds. And now he's had huge success with *Deadpool* from battling against the Hollywood system.

The Voices was on the Black List. Everyone wanted to play that part. Marjane met various actors who you would imagine in that role. She met them all, and then she met Ryan. She went, "No, it's him." Everyone else was going, "Oh, but he's this guy..." She's like, "No, no, no – it's him." Coming from a producer's point of view now, I see how it is. I see that guy will get you more money, or that guy will get you the distribution deal, or it'll probably be more of a hit with that guy in it. But actually, he was the right guy for that part.



GEMMA ARTERTON IN NUMBERS

\$1.78bn

Gemma Arterton's total box-office gross to date.

1

The total sequels she's done: *St. Trinian's 2: The Legend Of Fritton's Gold*.

68.4_{tk}

The Twitter followers Arterton has on her official page.

21

Arterton's age when she made her screen debut.

2

Number of films Arterton plays in French: *Gemma Boverly* and *Orphan*.



➤ **Now you're a producer making those calls, does that make acting easier if you don't get a role?**

Oh God, yeah. But I've always understood that process. I've never been particularly funny about stuff like that. I remember, there was one project I was offered, and then the director was fired. A new director came on, and he wanted a different cast. So I was off it, and so was the other guy. So they recast it, and I had to re-audition for it. So I auditioned for it and didn't get it, because someone else got it, who's way more famous than me. I was like, "Fine, fair enough. She will bring another two million to the budget."

As an actor you get rejected, you're seen as a product. But from a producer's perspective, I totally get it. I only get pissed off when they don't tell you. When you're up for something, and six months go by and you think you've got it. Just tell me. I can cope.

After *The Voices* you diversified further, learning French for *Gemma Bovary*. What was the experience of making a film in a second language like?

I'm really grateful for having done that film, actually, because it made me learn. It's still a process. It's an ongoing process. I learned it for that, and then I did *Orphan* afterwards. My plan is to make at least one French film every couple of years to keep it going. It's tricky. It's hard speaking in another language. You have to relinquish control a bit, and just know that that's the way it's coming out. I think it's also interesting... It gives you a different tone and a different type of person. I like that.

How did you get involved in *Orphan*?

Arnaud des Pallières had read an interview I'd done for a French magazine. I was talking about my dissatisfaction with female roles. He'd read that and thought, "Ooh," and sent me the script. And I loved it. It was one of the most talked-about scripts in France at the time. It was quite weird because I thought, "Why me?" It was quite a risk for him to take me, but he just said that there was something in me that he recognised in the character.

Your most recent film also messed with expectations – *The Girl With All The Gifts* was ostensibly a zombie horror, and yet it wasn't...

I like making films that surprise people. You say, "Oh, it's a zombie movie." It's not really. It's more than that. It's deeper. It's quite like those genre-bending films. But that's also a really great example of a really fucking great producer doing a good

job. Camille Gatin aims high. She was just like, “We’re going to send it to Glenn [Close]. We’re going to send it to Gemma and Paddy [Considine]. Let’s see if they do it.” And we all just did, because the script was really good. I just felt we were mucking in and getting down and dirty. I think everyone enjoyed that aspect of it. But equally, Camille won’t make a movie unless it’s equally balanced and racially balanced. It’s the first film that I’ve been in which ticked both boxes.

A good role model for being a producer on your next film, *The Escape*. How did that come about considering you produced, co-wrote and star in it?

Dominic Savage, who’s the director, and I met up about a year-and-a-half ago, and started talking about issues. He and I, together, formulated a story – it’s an improvised film so it was scene-by-scene. And then we did this ‘look book’ which gave people an idea. We shot it in three weeks. It’s all improvised and I’m in every single frame. It was really difficult, but ultimately really satisfying. You feel like you’ve definitely worked!

You also do loads of theatre in among your films. Why is that important to you? And how do you choose roles?

It’s sort of turning out to be that I do a play a year in the same slot, which is Christmas time and the beginning of the year. Films don’t really shoot then. So it’s all working out quite well. The last two that I did, *Nell Gwynn* and now *Saint Joan*, they just came by accident. I’m a bit of a believer in fate. That’s why sometimes I’m a bit like [snaps fingers] “I’ll do it” because things come to you for a reason. Both of them came to me for a reason. Both completely different parts – couldn’t be more different. But really strong women, obviously; flawed, both.

BIG BREAK
Arterton alongside Daniel Craig as Bond girl Strawberry Fields in *Quantum Of Solace*.



But it’s important for me to do theatre, because as an actor, I love acting. As much as I like producing and filmmaking and stuff, really my passion is being on stage. It’s what I trained to do and I feel it’s where you learn the most. I had a period when I was making all those movies and didn’t do a play for ages. I actually suffered, I think, because on a theatre run you’re practicing

every night and it keeps you developing. I think the theatre has a different impact to film because it’s live. Someone could come and see a film

and go, “Yeah, that was all right.” But if you’re sitting in the theatre and watching someone do it, it can have quite a profound effect on you, and I think it has more of an active effect on audience members. You’re earning your money – which is nothing; like £400 a week when you’re doing a play. But you do it because you really love it, and it means something.

Of all the work you’ve done, what do you get recognised for the most?

I probably get recognised twice a week, and people are like, “Are you Gemma Arterton?” But they won’t tell me what they know me from. I’m really lucky. I think I look quite different than when I’m in a film. I do the odd bit of press, and a chat show if I have to, but I keep a low profile. I think the dangerous thing when you’re an actor is, if your face becomes really, really famous, then people find it hard to see you [as a character]. I thought that when I watched *Jackie*. She was so good. But I just kept thinking it was Natalie Portman playing Jackie Kennedy. But it’s hard, because there’s a business side to what we do. You have to promote the film, because otherwise people won’t know about it. But if you think about it and you’re careful with it, you can find a way.

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“I’ve always admired Gemma’s work, but I’ve always felt she was rarely in movies that gave enough to her, apart from, say, *The Disappearance Of Alice Creed*. I just found that she was an extraordinary physical creature.”

Neil Jordan

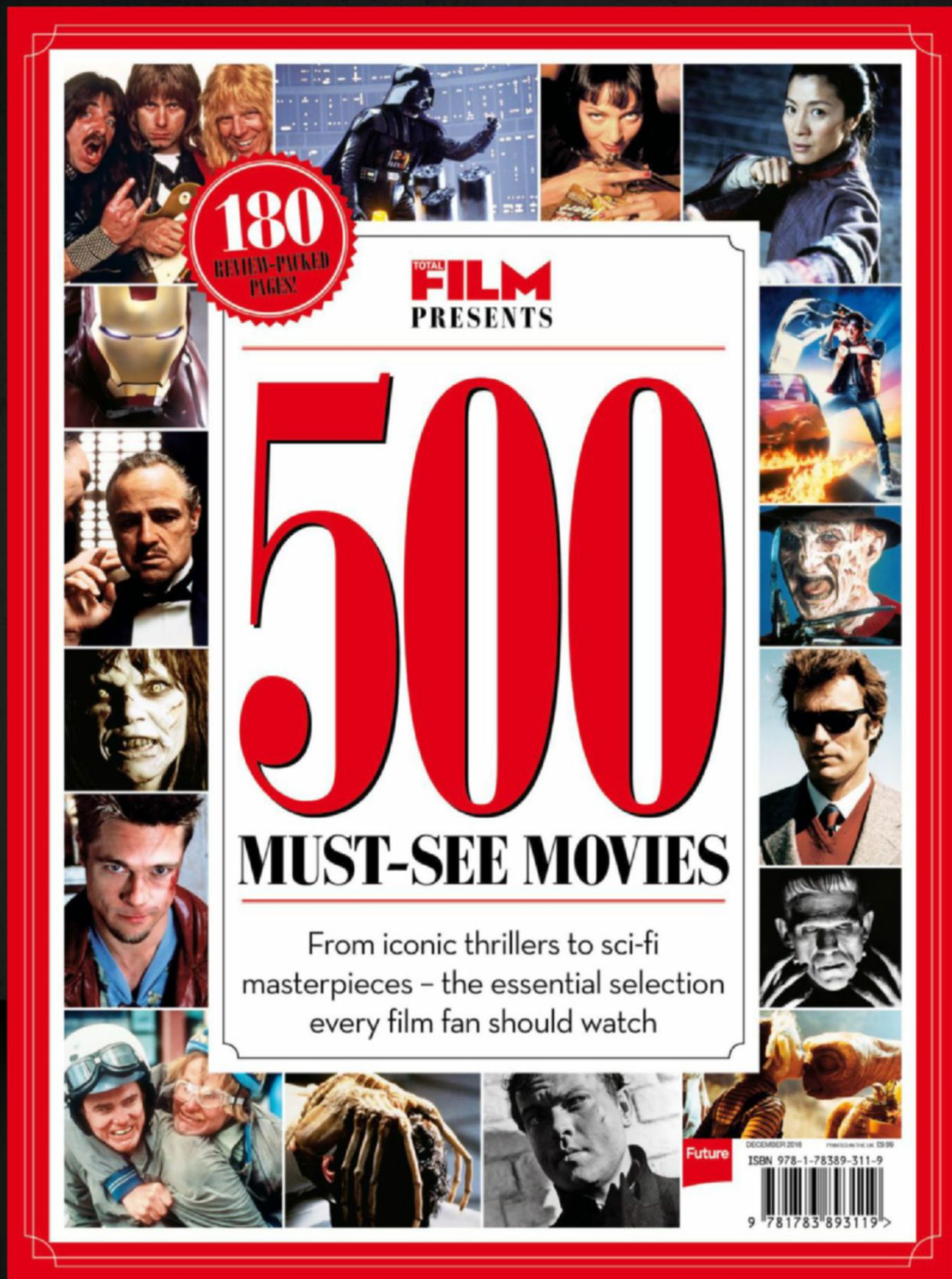
“She’s fiercely intelligent. She knows what she wants. She doesn’t come in saying, ‘Make me look good.’ She says, ‘Here’s what my character can offer.’”

Sam Worthington

“She’s absolutely perfect to work with. Very, very talented. Brought a lot of joy to the set [on *Tamara Drewe*] every day and added to the very laid-back and relaxed atmosphere on set on [that] film.”

Dominic Cooper

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##### WITNESS 1985

Mortensen debuted in this drama set in an Amish community.

##### THE MOSQUITO COAST 1986

Harrison Ford and son River Phoenix head to the jungle.

##### INHERENT VICE 2015

P.T. Anderson's hazy, smoke-ringed battle for America's soul.

**H**e's royally ace as Peter Jackson's Aragorn in *The Lord Of The Rings* trilogy and he has twice dug deep into the guts of violent, highly complex men for David Cronenberg (in 2005's *A History Of Violence* and 2007's *Eastern Promises*, for which he was Oscar nominated).

But it is as Ben, a libertarian outdoorsman who's raising his six children in the forests of the Pacific Northwest, that Viggo Mortensen delivers the performance of his career to date.

It is, as the saying goes, the role he was born to play. An excellent athlete at college, a natural leader and a sensitive soul who dabbles in music, poetry and painting, Mortensen grew up on ranches in Venezuela, in the foothills of Argentinian mountains and in the wilds of northern Idaho. Who else would fit free-spirited Ben quite

so snugly, whether hunting livestock, inviting feedback on Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* or leading the family in vertiginous rock-climbing?

"The first time I read the script, I laughed as much as I cried," Mortensen smiles on the disc's only extra, a four-minute (!) Making Of, and it's a fair bet that his emotions

were stirred so vigorously due to a strong sense of recognition. Writer/director Matt Ross chips in to reinforce such a view, saying, "Viggo is deeply knowledgeable about living in harmony with the natural environment."

*Silicon Valley* actor Ross, it should be noted, himself grew up in a commune, and penned *Captain Fantastic* to make sense of a seismic shift in his life: "The genesis was me being a father, grappling with my own questions of what kind of parent you are going to be in the contemporary United States."

#### BURGER OFF

Toggling between laughs and anguish and littered with the kind of idiosyncrasies that are so beloved by American indies, *Captain Fantastic* nonetheless plays straighter and truer than many of the dramedies that come out of Sundance Film Festival, where it debuted last year. In place of character







Mortensen picks up the pace, suddenly worried that he's left the hair straighteners on...



grandfather, far from being an oaf or ogre, has the children's interests at heart, and it transpires that Ben and his late wife may not have been singing entirely from the same hymn sheet. There's also the suggestion that had her illness been monitored rather than tucked away in the forest, she might still be alive.

## MR. KNIFE GUY

After a relatively light, larky first half, tensions begin to bubble, discontent escalates and sympathies start to shift. Ben's parenting philosophy suddenly seems not so much eccentric and anti-establishment as questionable and downright irresponsible – not least when he gifts his kids Ka-Bar fighting knives for Noam Chomsky Day (his substitute for Christmas). Is he a counterculture hero or an oppressive cult leader?

The truth, naturally, is somewhere in between, with *Captain Fantastic* acknowledging the importance of tolerance while leaning towards the need for America to change. It's a worldview that chimes with Mortensen's own politics ("I think most Americans will look back on this period since 1980 as morally bleak, intellectually fraudulent..." he said in a 2005 interview), and it makes for heartening viewing as Trump settles into the Oval Office. It's not for nothing that the camera lingers on a billboard reading 'Is it immigration or invasion?' when the family's bus first motors out of the pine trees and onto a freeway. *Captain Fantastic* encourages debate, and with it the road to a better future. [Jamie Graham](#)

quirks and stylistic twerks is a core of intellectual enquiry and emotional sincerity, as Ben loads the kids onto a battered bus and heads back to so-called civilisation for the funeral of his wife, their mother. She is to be buried, against her wishes, in a Christian service to be held in New Mexico under the stern gaze of her wealthy father Jack (Frank Langella), who threatens Ben with arrest should he show his gaunt, shaggy face at the ceremony.

Essentially a road trip into consumerist America, *Captain Fantastic* has the spellbound kids encounter shopping malls and food courts and supermarkets playing panpipe covers of Celine Dion's 'My Heart Will Go On', while Ben points their bows and

arrows in the direction of a field of sheep when a diner offers little more than hamburgers, fries and cola ("poison water").

A pit stop at the home of Ben's sister and her hubby (Kathryn Hahn and Steve Zahn), meanwhile, allows Ross the opportunity to verbalise some of his themes. Parenting arguments rage; honesty and open debate clash with social niceties and protective subterfuge; and our bright-eyed, engaged gaggle are sharply contrasted with their bored, petulant cousins who've been raised on Xbox.

But this is no blind celebration of a neo-hippie doctrine, or else a thudding satire on dumb, selfish, capitalist America. Langella's

**TOP**  
The funeral dress code was strictly black suits, flower power-style or gasmask and onesie.

**ABOVE**  
Ben Cash (Mortensen) leads the kids in daily training sessions.

## 'AS BEN, VIGGO MORTENSEN DELIVERS THE PERFORMANCE OF HIS CAREER TO DATE'





Stephen Lang's in no mood for turning a blind eye.

## house of whacks

HOME IS WHERE THE HURT IS...

### DON'T BREATHE 15

FILM ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

OUT NOW DVD, BD, Digital HD EXTRAS Commentary, Deleted/Extended scenes

Last year was a great one for horror – perhaps because what was happening in the real world was so horrendous. Often, as in *Under The Shadow*, *Green Room*, *10 Cloverfield Lane* and *Baskin*, the films showed people trapped by evil forces beyond their control – clearly a situation to which many could relate.

Directed by Fede Álvarez, who made 2013's fiendish *Evil Dead* remake, this home-invasion thriller is as perfectly timed as it is calibrated. It's a deliciously simple set-up: three house-breakers (including one whose dad runs a burglar-alarm firm) plan to rob Stephen Lang's blind army vet when they hear he's hiding a fortune – but that's not all he's hiding...

Set in the same decayed Detroit as *It Follows* and *Only Lovers Left Alive*, the film plays out like a 90-minute version of that shot in *Panic Room*, with Pedro Luque's wonderfully floaty camera

following our (anti)heroes over, around and through Lang's house/trap.

Needless to say, breathing is in short supply. Cleverly conceived by Álvarez and Rodo Sayagues, the film holds surprises aplenty, not least a scene of breathtakingly invasive cruelty. But it's also aware of the bigger picture, with its chilling vision of America's dispossessed having little choice but to turn on each other – and what's more horrible than that? There's a mixed bag of extras – decent commentary, five skimpy featurettes, some deleted scenes. [Matt Glasby](#)



### DEEPWATER HORIZON 12

FILM ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

OUT NOW DVD, BD, 4K BD, Digital HD

EXTRAS Featurettes

Peter Berg's real-life epic mounts a meticulous recreation of what went wrong on the offshore Deepwater Horizon rig in April 2010, resulting in multiple deaths and the worst oil spill in US history. The jargon-heavy first half is baffling, as Kurt Russell's crew chief and John Malkovich's BP exec argue over "kill lines", while Mark Wahlberg's everyman technician keeps being ignored. But the Deepwater implosion is spectacularly handled. The emotional fallout is gracefully, intensely played too. [James Mottram](#)



### SOUTHSIDE WITH YOU 12

FILM ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

OUT NOW DVD, Digital HD EXTRAS Interviews

It's rare to see a date movie as smart as writer/director Richard Tanne's likeable, Linklater-esque romantic drama. Then again, it's rare to have a couple as smart as president-to-be Barack Obama (Parker Sawyers) and his future first lady, Michelle Robinson (Tika Sumpter). What might've easily been a cheesy Hallmark movie becomes a densely woven 'walk and talk' about race, gender and politics. Judged as the Obamas' origin story, it's a timely reminder of the effort it takes to become a great leader – but even if we didn't know the couple's outcome, the film makes us want to. [Simon Kinnear](#)



### THE UNKNOWN GIRL 15

FILM ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

OUT NOW DVD, BD, VOD EXTRAS None

Despite a slight dip below form, the Dardenne brothers' latest social-realist fable is a focused spin on detective-thriller basics. Adèle Haenel may not match the box-office pull of Marion Cotillard in the brothers' *Two Days, One Night*, but she's pitch-perfect – driven, guilt-wracked – as a doctor (Davin) investigating the murder of a girl she didn't let into her practice. The mystery is slight, and the plot suffers from diversions, but as Davin plays amateur gumshoe, a portrait of character and community emerges with great insight, subtlety and empathy. [Kevin Harley](#)



# the round-up

Nazis, cults and dodgy neighbours...



## INFERNO 15

FILM **★★★★☆** EXTRAS **★★★★☆**

**OUT NOW** Digital HD **20 FEBRUARY**  
DVD, BD, 4K BD **EXTRAS** Featurettes,  
Deleted scenes

**T**om Hanks is back for a third screen outing as Dan Brown's literary cash cow Robert Langdon (think a less sexy Indy), this time afflicted by Bourne-sized amnesia as he charges around Italy solving cryptic puzzles to prevent Ben Foster's biotech billionaire from killing half the world. Directed, like previous instalments *The Da Vinci Code* and *Angels & Demons*, by Ron Howard, it fails to ignite. Jittery camerawork, jump cuts, Felicity Jones on sidekick duties... nothing, it seems, can inject urgency into this flagging franchise. **Jamie Graham**

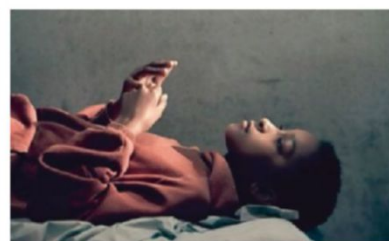


## WAR ON EVERYONE 15

FILM **★★★★☆** EXTRAS **★★★★☆**

**OUT NOW** DVD, BD, Digital HD **EXTRAS**  
Featurettes, Interviews

**M**aking his first movie across the pond, John Michael McDonagh returns to the terrain of his 2011 debut, *The Guard*, with this disappointing buddy comedy about two corrupt detectives (Alexander Skarsgård, Michael Peña) out to score big. The lowlifes they mix with are vivid – Caleb Landry Jones as an effete club owner, Theo James as a violent English aristocrat – but the humour is often too self-aware and snarky to really hit home. As its title suggests, McDonagh's movie doesn't make friends easily. But its biggest crime? The cop-out finale. **James Mottram**



## THE GIRL WITH ALL THE GIFTS 15

FILM **★★★★☆** EXTRAS **★★★★☆**

**OUT NOW** DVD, BD, Digital HD **EXTRAS**  
Making Of, Interviews, B-roll footage

**H**ow to keep the zombie apocalypse genre evolving and, well, fresh? Perhaps by focusing on that most taboo of creatures, the child-zombie – glimpsed everywhere from *Night Of The Living Dead* to *[REC]*, but here given centre stage in this contemporary riff on the Pandora's Box fable. Newcomer Sennia Nanua is terrific as the horribly conflicted pre-teen 'hungry' Melanie, caught between Glenn Close's gimlet-eyed scientist, for whom Melanie could mean a cure, and Gemma Arterton's kindly schoolteacher. Inventive, grim, affecting. **Ali Catterall**



Taut and tense, WW2 thriller *Anthropoid* (★★★, out now, DVD, BD, Digital) has Cillian Murphy and Jamie Dornan play real-life Czech resistance fighters tasked with killing top Nazi Reinhard Heydrich.

*Modern Family's* Sarah Hyland stars in *Satanic* (★★, out now, DVD), about some morbid mates who tour some LA murder hotspots and meet an actual satanic cult. All chant and no pay-off.

Kiyoshi Kurosawa's insidious thriller *Creepy* (★★★★, out now, Dual Format) lives up its title. A psychologist becomes obsessive over a missing-family case while his wife meets a weird – yep, creepy – neighbour.



Jesse Eisenberg and Kristen Stewart star in Woody Allen's paean to '30s Hollywood, *Café Society* (★★★ out now, DVD, BD, Digital), a familiar love-don't-run-smooth tale that's spellbindingly shot by DP Vittorio Storaro.

Two brothers are transported to a terror dimension via a VHS boardgame in throwback horror *Beyond The Gates* (★★★, out 20 Febuary, DVD, Digital) Slow to start, but a fun final act.



## TROLLS U

FILM **★★★★☆** EXTRAS **★★★★☆**

**OUT 13 FEBRUARY** DVD, BD, Digital HD  
**EXTRAS** Party/Sing-along mode, Featurettes,  
Deleted scenes

**D**reamworks' bid to build a franchise from the troll-doll brand pitches younger than most modern animation, and really, these trolls could do with more bite. The relentless positivity quickly becomes exhausting. What saves the film is that form and content are in perfect sync. Structuring the story as a jukebox musical pays off with smart song choices, especially a witty use of 'The Sound Of Silence'. And the animation offers plenty of weirdness through its freakish menagerie. **Simon Kinnear**



## TRAIN TO BUSAN 15

FILM **★★★★☆** EXTRAS **★★★★☆**

**OUT 20 FEBRUARY** Digital HD **27 FEBRUARY** DVD, BD **EXTRAS** Featurettes

**O**ne of the best horrors of 2016 pulls into Small Screen Station – excellent news, given it pretty much fell through the tracks on its cinema release. Those who did take a punt on this South Korean smash were richly rewarded. With the emphasis on characterisation, heart and depth, this is more Stephen King than Romero; and while there's clearly nothing new about its raggle-taggle survivors vs flesh-eating hordes set-up, those emotional currents allied to some literally shattering set-pieces make a potent combo. **Ali Catterall**



## SAUSAGE PARTY 15

FILM **★★★★☆** EXTRAS **★★★★☆**

**OUT NOW** DVD, BD, 4K BD, Digital HD  
**EXTRAS** Featurettes, Line-O-Rama (BD)

**I**n a grocery store, a group of foodstuffs led by a Seth Rogen-voiced hot dog discover the awful truth: that humans eat them. This irreverent adult animation packs in an ace cast (Edward Norton, Salma Hayek, Jonah Hill, James Franco), some deliciously twisted set-pieces (not least the X-rated 'orgy') and some hilarious Disney-spoofing songs. But the novelty value runs out well before the meta-ending; if only plot and character didn't feel so secondary to sick gags. Ideal for post-pub viewing, this is fun but not filling. **James Mottram**





His parents really started to worry when they saw the coat he'd picked...

## boy trouble

A DISTURBINGLY GOOD DEBUT...

### THE CHILDHOOD OF A LEADER 12

FILM ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

OUT NOW DVD, BD, Digital HD EXTRAS Commentary, Short film, Isolated score (BD)

**A**s an actor, Brady Corbet has sat conspicuously apart from his peers, preferring gigs for the great European auteurs – Haneke, von Trier – to getting the call from Hollywood. So it's little surprise that Corbet's directorial debut shows that his maverick streak and impeccable taste extend behind the camera.

On paper, this is a straightforward chamber piece about – as Corbet describes it – “a wayward boy”. Yet the setting, near Paris ahead of 1919's Treaty of Versailles, gives the tantrums of Prescott (excellent newcomer Tom Sweet, a period-drama Damien Thorn) an allegorical edge. What kind of leader will this budding tyrant become when he's already making life hell for parents Bérénice Bejo and Liam Cunningham?

Right from the arresting opening – archive footage cut to a nerve-

shredding overture – Corbet creates an ominous sense of dread. Arguably the director tips his head too freely in Haneke's direction, but he has precocious command for a filmmaker still in his twenties. The film is bold, ambitious and resonant.

The disc includes Corbet's cryptic, uncomfortable 2008 short *Protect You + Me*, made when he was still a teenager. It's proof his own childhood was spent cultivating the skills that are now in bloom. **Simon Kinnear**



### THE INFILTRATOR 15

FILM ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

OUT NOW DVD, BD EXTRAS Commentary, Featurettes, Deleted scenes

**D**epictions of real-life undercover cops taking on the criminal elite already crowd the big screen, and Brad Pitt's (*The Lincoln Lawyer*) film does little to challenge the genre's best. Bryan Cranston shines, however, as '80s customs agent Bob Mazur, who took on the Medellín Cartel by chasing the cash rather than the coke. The tale is entertaining enough, with a fake fiancée (Diane Kruger) adding intrigue, but there's little new here, and some contrived plotting is infuriating. Mazur himself makes an arresting extras appearance. **Andrew Westbrook**



### JACK REACHER: NEVER GO BACK 12

FILM ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

OUT 13 FEBRUARY Digital HD 27 FEBRUARY DVD, BD EXTRAS Featurettes

**T**om Cruise returns as Lee Child's ex-military drifter in this so-so sequel. With less tension than in his first outing, Reacher's now on the run with an accused soldier (Cobie Smulders) and his maybe/maybe not daughter (Danika Yarosh). But this family dynamic only goes so far in the absence of any great set-pieces or a decent antagonist. Then again, following the first film's Werner Herzog appearance was always going to be mission: impossible. Still, the seemingly ageless Cruise is ever watchable. **James Mottram**



### STORKS U

FILM ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

OUT NOW DVD, BD, Digital HD EXTRAS Ninjago short, Commentary (BD), Deleted scenes (BD), Featurette (BD), Music video

**N**icholas Stoller (*Bad Neighbours*) and former Pixar animator Doug Sweetland helm this riotously funny animation. Junior (Andy Samberg) is the top bird for an online retailer that once delivered babies. When a new infant is accidentally pumped out by the dormant baby maker, he teams up with human orphan Tulip (Katie Crown) to take the infant home. Logic is in short supply, but *Storks* is surprisingly sweet, with a consistent gag rate and a wolf pack that deserves a *Minions*-style spin-off. **Jordan Farley**





It was a bad moment to have walked around the corner...

## heading south

PECKINPAH'S FINAL BLAZE OF GLORY...

# BRING ME THE HEAD OF ALFREDO GARCIA 18

FILM ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

1974 **OUT NOW** BD **EXTRAS** Commentaries, Documentary, Lecture, Songs, Booklet



**T**hough some would nominate 1977's James Coburn-led WW2 drama *Cross Of Iron*, most agree that this bleak, savage and defiant picture is Sam Peckinpah's last hoorah. The booze and brutal run-ins with studios had started to take their toll, but the director stood tall for one final, bloody battle before his career began winding down.

*Bring Me The Head...* begins with a young pregnant woman in repose by a lake. But that's your lot as far as tranquillity goes. The woman's marched before her fat-cat industrialist father (Emilio Fernández) and brutalised until she gives up the name of the unborn child's father: Alfredo Garcia. A price of a million dollars is put on Garcia's head and a pair of bounty hunters (Gig Young, Robert Webber) set off in pursuit, but the focus soon shifts to world-weary bartender Bennie (Warren Oates), who's informed of the

premium and roars off across Mexico in a Ford convertible with his prostitute girlfriend Elita (Isela Vega) riding shotgun. Thing is, Garcia's already dead, so it's a case of exhuming the body, lopping off the head and returning it in a burlap sack...

This is a film rife with desert scrub countryside, dilapidated towns, sweat, grime and blood-splattered shootouts – all of it viewed through a cloud of flies and the bottom of the tequila bottles that fuel both Bennie behind the wheel and Peckinpah behind the camera.

### SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED...

#### THE BALLAD OF CABLE HOGUE 1970

An unusually cheery Peckinpah on his favourite theme of civilisation infringing on the west.

#### STRAW DOGS 1971

Peckinpah's Cornish western (of sorts) again explores man's violent impulses.

#### THE VOICES 2014

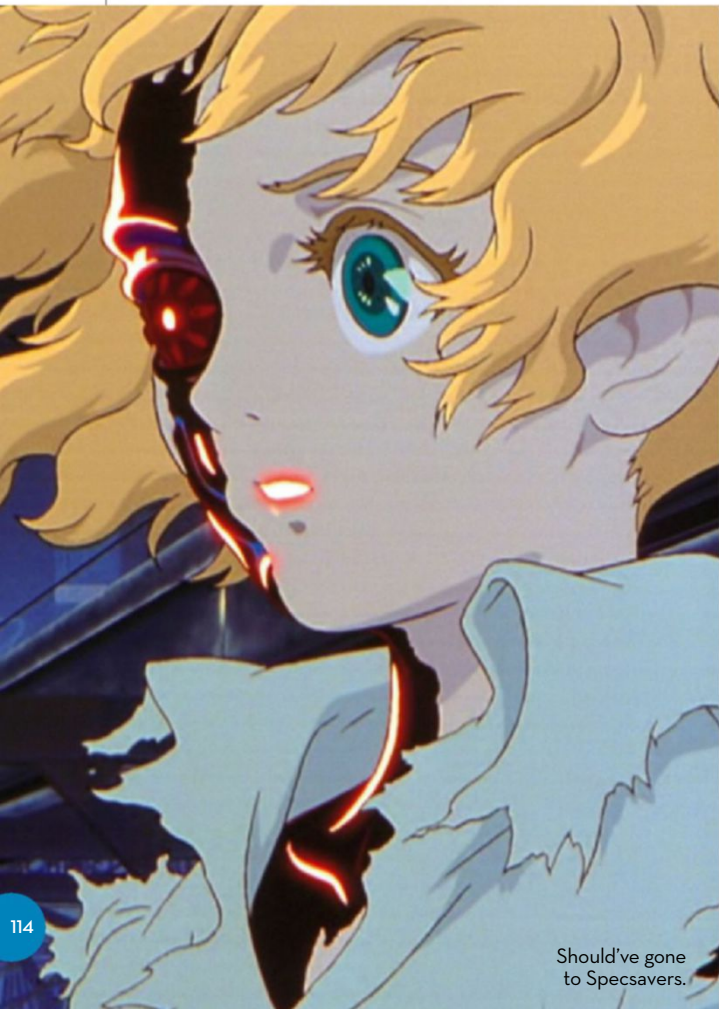
More decapitated head-based humour – this one belonging to Gemma Arterton.

There's greed, squalor and squandered love – plus the occasional grace note.

On the first of two excellent commentaries, Stephen Prince, author of *Savage Cinema: Sam Peckinpah And The Rise Of Ultraviolent Movies*, talks of the film's "drunken quality", which is heightened by Peckinpah breaking editing rules as gleefully as those kids in *The Wild Bunch* feed scorpions to ants. A second yak-track by scholars Paul Seydor, Garner Simmons and David Weddle notes that this "hallucinatory" vibe is amped up by sepulchral day-for-night photography, and that even the humour has a reeling, sick-making quality: Bennie bonds with the head, calling it "Al", to form an unconventional buddy movie.

Both commentaries discuss the film's themes of patriarchy, religion and the past occupying the present across the director's body of work, while the audio file of a Peckinpah Q&A plus Paul Joyce's ace 1993 doc *Sam Peckinpah: Man Of Iron* also dig deep into the man and his movies. Unlike Al's head in the sack, there are no flies on this package. **Jamie Graham**





## city limitless

TAKING A LANG VIEW OF THE FUTURE...

### METROPOLIS *PG*

FILM ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

2001 **OUT NOW** Steelbook **3 MARCH** Dual Format **EXTRAS** Making of, Interviews

**B**ack in 1927, Fritz Lang directed *Metropolis*, one of the classic dystopian movies. Twenty-two years later the great manga artist Osamu Tezuka (*Astro Boy*) produced his own highly idiosyncratic take on the story. Fast-forward to 2001, and screenwriter Katsuhiro Ōtomo (*Akira*) and director Rintaro (*Galaxy Express 999*) bring Tezuka's vision to the screen. With spectacular results.

And now it's on Blu-ray; prepare to be bowled over by the sheer visual impact of the urban landscapes. As in the original, we're in a towering futuristic city: Lang's downtrodden workers have become robots. An unscrupulous politician, Duke Red, has commissioned an eccentric scientist, Dr. Laughton (a nod to actor Charles), to create a super-robot in the image of his dead daughter. But this robogirl, Tima, who looks like a naïve child, is in fact a super-weapon that'll give Duke Red invincible powers...

But the plot is the least of it. What's breathtaking is the scale and ingenuity of the animation, a deftly integrated blend of cel (the characters) and CGI (the settings). Startling camera angles and vertiginous perspectives compel the eye, every frame overflowing with colour and detail. And rather than the expected electronic or lush symphonic score, Rintaro gives us classic swing jazz numbers and – at an emotional crux in the action – Ray Charles' heartfelt rendition of 'I Can't Stop Loving You'. It chimes perfectly. **Philip Kemp**

Should've gone to Specsavers.



### THE HIRED HAND 15

FILM ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

1971 **OUT NOW** Dual Format **EXTRAS** Commentary, Documentary, Deleted scenes

**B**ringing his counterculture ethos to the western genre, Peter Fonda switches motorbikes for horses in his impressionistic directorial debut, a montage-laden, almost mystical tale of responsibility and revenge. Fonda, in his first post-*Easy Rider* role, also stars as drifter Harry, who, after years on the road with fellow journeyman Arch (Warren Oates, oozing gruff charm), heads home to his daughter and wife (Verna Bloom, terrific), before facing a test of where his loyalties lie. Bountiful extras include an interview with fan Martin Scorsese. **Andrew Westbrook**



### THE DRILLER KILLER 18

FILM ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

1979 **OUT NOW** DVD, BD, Dual Format **EXTRAS** Commentary, Documentary, Visual essay, Interview

**I**nspired by *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, *Taxi Driver* and the films of Pier Paolo Pasolini, Abel Ferrara's exploitation debut sees the director himself play a New York painter driven mad by pompous criticism, mounting bills and the punk band living above him. Naturally, he vents his frustration by killing vagrants with a power tool. Aggressively shot and cut, *The Driller Killer* was one of 39 'video nasties' banned in the early '80s (it finally appeared uncut in 2002) but the real blood 'n' guts is in the DIY filmmaking, as Ferrara's impassioned commentary attests. **Jamie Graham**



### BLACK ORPHEUS 12

FILM ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

1959 **OUT NOW** BD **EXTRAS** Documentary, Interviews, Video essays

**M**arcel Camus' Oscar and Palme d'Or-winner, with its ravishing visuals and toe-tapping soundtrack, updates the myth of Orpheus to 1950s Rio de Janeiro. The French director's unique fusion of dance musical, romantic tragedy and surreal odyssey through a modern underworld casts a beguiling charm. Yes, it's easy to criticise the romanticised take on favela life, but the film's heart is pure. Camus was intoxicated by the exuberance of Carnival, samba and bossa nova, and it's still impossible not to swoon. **Simon Kinnear**





## HIS GIRL FRIDAY 12

FILM ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

1940 **OUT NOW** BD **EXTRAS** *The Front Page* film, Documentary, Featurettes, Radio versions

**H**oward Hawks' classic newspaper comedy-romance buffs up gorgeously here, all pearly silvers and inky blacks. Based on '20s play *The Front Page*, it sees Cary Grant's amoral editor trying to grab back reporter and ex-wife Rosalind Russell with a hot Chicago crime story. Wisecracks zing like pistol shots in the 240-word-per-minute dialogue, creating comedy as cynical and unsentimental as Hawks' hardboiled journoes. High-class extras include detailed analysis and an interview with Hawks; best of all is a niftily restored 1931 film version of *The Front Page*. **Kate Stables**



## FRIGHT NIGHT 18

FILM ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

1985 **OUT NOW** Steelbook 27 MARCH Dual Format **EXTRAS** Documentary, Interviews, Press kit, Booklet

**W**hen teenager Charley (William Ragsdale) becomes convinced his neighbour (Chris Sarandon) is a vampire, no one believes him – not his mum, not the cops, not his girlfriend. So he turns to TV host Peter Vincent (Roddy McDowall), 'The Great Vampire Killer' – to find he's an ageing actor who doesn't want to know. Tom Holland's cult horror skilfully blends comedy with scares, with Sarandon acting up a storm. Forget the 2011 remake – this is the *Night* to remember. Unfeasibly lavish extras. **Philip Kemp**



## VARIÉTÉ PG

FILM ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

1925 **OUT NOW** Dual Format **EXTRAS** American version, Three scores, Booklet

**A** landmark in the careers of director E.A. Dupont, vampish icon Lya De Putti and Weimar superstar Emil Jannings, *Variété* is a touchstone of silent German cinema. At the time, its USP was the dazzling camerawork capturing a seedy love triangle on, under and above a vaudeville trapeze act. To modern eyes, what impresses is the subtleties, with De Putti and Jannings giving performances way ahead of their time. A Masters Of Cinema release sporting a pristine Blu transfer, it looks and sounds like it was made yesterday. **Paul Bradshaw**



## COHEN & TATE 15

FILM ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

1988 **OUT NOW** Dual Format **EXTRAS** Featurette, Commentary, Storyboards, Extended scene

**A**n overlooked '80s thriller, Eric Red's blood-soaked B-movie features one great performance, one promising one and one god-awful one. Roy Scheider is at his grizzled best as a veteran hitman paired with Adam Baldwin's loose cannon on a job to kidnap Travis (Harley Cross), a nine-year-old witness to a mob murder. Baldwin is way OTT but Cross is decent. It's a mixed bag of a road movie, but Red directs some stand-out set-pieces, including the killer ending, with real aplomb. **James Mottram**



## CUL-DE-SAC 12

FILM ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

1966 **OUT 27 FEBRUARY** BD **EXTRAS** Making of, Interview, Booklet

**R**oman Polanski's at his most maliciously playful in this absurdist comedy that sends up home invasion thrillers. Set on Lindisfarne, off the Northumbrian coast, the solitude of bald transvestite Donald Pleasence and his much younger French wife (Françoise Dorléac) is intruded upon by two gangsters, one Irish and dying (Jack MacGowan), the other American and aggressive (Lionel Stander). The games that follow take in humiliation, sado-masochism and betrayal, all observed with coolly detached amusement. **Philip Kemp**



## BLACK SOCIETY TRILOGY 18

FILM ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

1995-99 **OUT NOW** DVD, BD **EXTRAS** Commentaries, Interviews

**T**rust Takashi Miike to release a 'trilogy' without any recurring characters, narrative crossovers or remotely similar themes. On the other hand, they're all ultra-violent, ultra-watchable triad dramas forming a boxset that would chill the warmest of hearts. Of the three, the strongest is *Rainy Dog* (1997): less of a gut-puncher than bad-cop shockfest *Shinjuku Triad Society* (1995), nor as socially acute as *Ley Lines* (1999), but bleaker, bolder and more refined than anything Miike has done since. Extras include chat-tracks by Miike biographer Tom Mes and a new interview with the auteur himself. **Paul Bradshaw**





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## LEGO BATMAN MOVIE PLAYSETS

TOYS **OUT NOW**

**B**oats do not float,” cautions the box for Batcave Break-In: pretty much the only imperfection we’ve found among the new range of Bat-themed play-bricks. Featuring a mighty Batboat vs Duckmobile showdown, Break-In’s the one that’s been stealing most of our weekends (definitely not our working hours, oh no), but we’ve also been fiddling endlessly with The Scuttler (vine monster, net shooter, hidden jetpack). Best title, though, goes to Clayface Splat Attack.



## BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN AND MONSTER MODEL KIT

COLLECTIBLES **OUT NOW**

Love isn't easy, especially when you're a literal monster with a reticent better half. This Bride of Frankenstein two-figure model kit features the amorous monster wooing his crazy-haired lady. Comprising 90 pieces, the 1:18 scale model kit features a sculpt by designer Jeff Yagher. The stunning final product is 10 inches tall and 9.5 inches wide. Bring your own glue to this party. Available from Moebius Models.



## STAR WARS I LOVE YOU, I KNOW NECKLACE

ACCESSORY **OUT NOW**

If you love *Star Wars*, then it's likely that Han Solo and Princess Leia have shaped your #RelationshipGoals. Now the magic of when she says "I love you" and he says "I know" in *The Empire Strikes Back* has been reproduced on a necklace that you can split with your bae. Put the two halves together and you get the Rebel Alliance symbol (lest we forget the bigger picture – this is about more than two people, guys!). Available from HerUniverse.



## BEAUTY AND THE BEAST POP VINYL

COLLECTIBLES **OUT NOW**

Anticipation is off the charts for Disney's impending live-action version of *Beauty And The Beast*, and Funko is feeding that frenzy with brand new Pop Vinyls that celebrate the beloved characters. There are new designs for the Emma Watson-inspired Belle, a dapper-looking Beast, his enchanted housekeepers (Lumière et al) and that cad Gaston.



## ROGUE ONE TITLES

BOOKS **OUT NOW**

Sticker books! Colouring books! Make-your-own-U-wing books! (We did; its maiden voyage was cut short by the cat.) There's enough *Rogue One* reading material to sink a space station including, naturally, a DK-published *Ultimate Visual Guide*, penned by Lucasfilm's own Yoda, Pablo Hidalgo. The infinite tidbits range from K2's age (12) to the dark secrets of Cassian's top pocket. Plus behind-the-scenes gold, such as maskless stormtroopers dozing at Canary Wharf. **TB/ML**



## BACK TO THE FUTURE MCFLY LOVE T-SHIRT

APPAREL **OUT NOW**

Not all of us are suave when it comes to the art of love. We want to be Casanova, but we're more George McFly. This shirt celebrates that geek's famous faux pas of "You're my density", with an actual formula of M (mass) divided by V (volume) to get P (Density). Don't worry, your true love will get it and that's all that matters. Available now by Kellabell9 via Woot.





ON  
LOCATION



# travel chaos

BEHIND THE SCENES OF E4'S GAP-YEAR-COM, FOREIGN BODIES...

**I** got a call saying, 'The cow's stuck in traffic but we do have 20 goats. Will that do?'" The shoot for E4's new comedy-drama series, *Foreign Bodies*, was, says director Jonathan van Tulleken, "hairy but fun". Such are the risks of a country-hopping project about a chaotic gap year, filmed on location over four-and-a-half months in Thailand, Vietnam, Nepal, Malaysia and China. "It was a bit like being at war," laughs series creator Tom Basden, a comedy writer and actor best known for his work on *Fresh Meat* and *Plebs*. "We just had to keep pushing on to Berlin and hope a few of us were alive." For Berlin, read Beijing: from the moment the cameras zoom gasp-inducingly into the Chinese capital, it's clear this is a more ambitious and inventive portrayal of Brits abroad than, say, *Carry On Abroad*.

"I did a gap year back in 1999," explains Basden. "I remember not having any idea what I was meant to be doing. Even in the first flushes of getting drunk, I had the sense that I hadn't lived long enough to know how to enjoy myself properly. The world of travel has really changed: there's this enormous pressure on young people to make the most of their time and money. That was a meaty enough subject to justify spending time with these characters, without it being a collection of piss-ups and tuk-tuk rides."

These characters may make an unlikely quartet, yet they're instantly familiar gap-year stereotypes whose depths are only revealed over time. Dylan (newcomer Anders Hayward) is an annoying pseud, but – in a story inspired by an almost identical incident in van Tulleken's past – he's also a delusional romantic who's travelled halfway across the world to win his girlfriend back. Sean (Ade Oyefeso, *Youngers*) is Dylan's easygoing best mate, eager to escape a dull domestic life. May (Alice Lee, *Faking It*) is an

## SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED...

### THE BEACH (2000)

Classic example of a South-east Asian gap year going really, really wrong.

### FRESH MEAT (2011-16)

Snark, heart and seemingly awful characters you can't help liking in this student sitcom.

### THE INBETWEENERS MOVIE (2011)

E4 spin-off reinvents the 'young Brits aboard' concept with stunning success.

uptight American being bankrolled by her parents to reconnect with her Chinese roots. And Ashley (Brittney Wilson, *Bates Motel*), takes ruthless advantage of college-mate May's plentiful funds, her brashness masking deep insecurities.

## COCKTAIL HOUR(S)

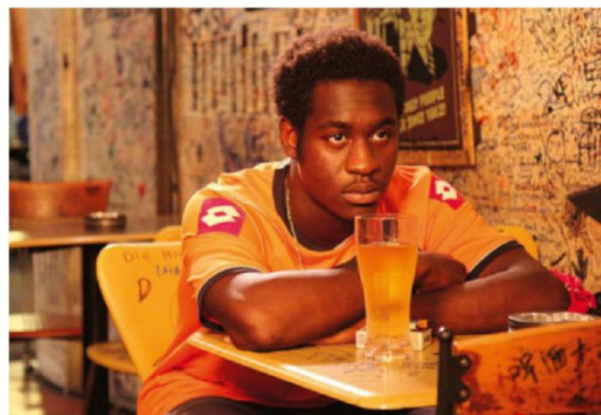
"British people think of themselves as quite worldly, but we're an incredibly sheltered and insular bunch of dickheads," claims Basden. "That's also true for Americans, if not more so, but that's why those nationalities work as leads for this." Their adventures take in Buddhist temples, Malaysian jungles, the Great Wall and even the legendary Full Moon Party on the Thai island of Ko Pha Ngan, at which the group's fifth wheel, Greg (Tim Key, *Alan Partridge: Alpha Papa*) – a divorcé in crisis, attempting to relive his youth – goes completely off the rails.

Ever the committed professional, Key confesses to going a bit Method on





Fitting in seamlessly with the locals is part of any good gap year.



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## 'IT'S MORE THAN A COLLECTION OF PISS-UPS AND TUK-TUK RIDES'

TOM BASDEN

the lychee cocktails. "It was the most memorable day of filming I've done," he says. "It was me, hanging out at the Full Moon Party with these free extras. Greg moves through the gears of excitement, anticipation and hope, only to collapse in the sea, dreams dashed."

The shoot was an unforgettable experience for the whole cast. Hayward's eyes widen as he recalls dodging mopeds on the streets of Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam, or choreographing a complex pratfall in Nepal before crowds of interested locals. Oyefoso, meanwhile, spent his

birthday in Taman Negara, the oldest rainforest in the world, surrounded by monkeys as cast and crew shared a single ecotoilet. "We knew everything about everyone's bowel movements," concedes van Tulleken.

### TOUR DE FARCE

For some, the term 'gap year' means trustafarians running surf shacks and staying in fleabitten motels discovered in a *Lonely Planet* – exactly the sort of dated clichés Basden hopes to avoid with *Foreign Bodies*. Travel, after all, has moved on: true isolation is almost impossible in an age of smartphones, Twitter and Instagram.

"You read about all these studies saying so many people get news from Facebook," he says, "that people find it more and more difficult to have access to ideas that aren't already their own. While there is cynicism about people's motives for

### MIND THE GAP

Ade Oyefoso and Brittney Wilson (above), plus Alice Lee (below) fill three-quarters of the central quartet.

travel, I hope people see *Foreign Bodies* as advocating travel and broadening your horizons. In today's universe of Brexit and President Trump, it's important for people to get out of their own head and the immediate concerns of their community."

This was certainly the case for the four young leads, all of whom have been too busy building careers to travel the world. "It was a lot of work, but the best time ever," reckons Wilson. "None of us argued or ended up hating each other. It was a blast and a joy to be around genuinely lovely people – a huge life experience and professional experience," adds Hayward. Not that the characters themselves should be seen as model travellers. "We do everything wrongly in the show," laughs Wilson. "We're a 'What Not To Do' guide to travelling..." **Gabriel Tate**

FOREIGN BODIES AIRS ON E4 FROM NEXT MONTH.







# home invasion

FIVE THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT ALT-HISTORY THRILLER SS-GB...

## 1 THE NAZIS RULE BRITAIN

BBC One's new five-part series is based on a novel by Len Deighton, the man behind Harry Palmer and *The Ipcress File*. It's 1941, the Luftwaffe has won the Battle of Britain and, with the US still uncommitted and the pact between Hitler and Stalin in place, the war is effectively over. An apparently routine murder case attracts the attention of Scotland Yard ace Douglas Archer (Sam Riley), sidekick Harry Woods (*Game Of Thrones*' James Cosmo) and some very senior Nazis. Archer, widowed during the invasion and with a young son to support, just wants to do his job and maintain law and order. Nazi stooge or rebel-in-waiting? Time will tell.

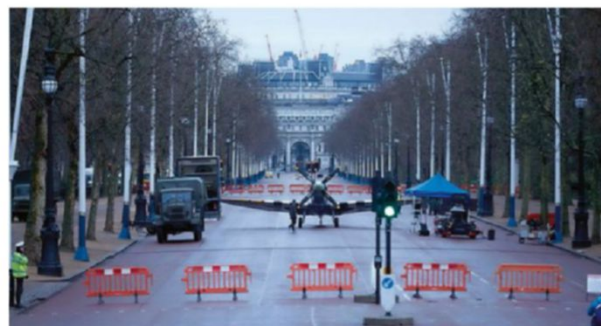
## 2 IT'S A WARTIME NOIR...

Chain-smoking and brooding beneath a trilby, Archer unavoidably recalls classic hard-boiled detective Sam Spade from *The Maltese Falcon*. Britain is splintered between collaborators, resistance cells and those keeping calm and carrying on, while the occupying forces of the German army and the SS are themselves riven with bickering and infighting. And then there's Barbara Barga (Kate Bosworth), an American journalist of undisclosed affiliations and apparent connections to the case. Blonde, quick-witted

and ambiguously alluring, she's a classic femme fatale.

## 3...AND NO 'ALLO 'ALLO

Cast and crew are, thankfully, multinational. "We don't have English actors speaking 'like zis'," laughs Riley, who lives in Berlin and speaks German. Instead, the occupying forces include Teutonic stage royalty in Lars Eidinger and Rainer Boch, while director Philipp Kadelbach helmed highly acclaimed German WW2 miniseries *Generation War*. British screenwriters Neal Purvis and Robert Wade have worked on all the Bonds since *The World Is Not Enough*, yet SS-GB offered an opportunity that the 007 franchise never could. "We've always wanted to do something with Nazis," grins Wade. "Doesn't everybody want the opportunity to put jackboots on Whitehall?"



## SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED...

**CASABLANCA** 1942  
Reluctant heroism abounds in this still-influential wartime classic.

**BATTLE OF BRITAIN** 1969  
James Cosmo's first film credit depicts a nation perilously close to defeat.

**THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE** 2015-PRESENT  
Dystopian alt-history in which America is divided between the Axis powers.

## 4 LONDON'S BEEN TRANSFORMED

When *Small Screen* visits the set, there are swastikas in the stairwell of Met Police HQ, SS officers stalking the corridors and all documents printed in both English and German. The effect is subtly chilling. "In this story, the Blitz hasn't happened so the war damage is relatively small," Purvis explains. "The main changes are in the familiar emblems: the Tube's been rebranded and road signs have been changed. They've taken symbols of Britishness and perverted them."

## 5 IT RESONATES WITH THE PRESENT

"Would I join the resistance?" wonders Riley. "If you'd asked me three years ago, I'd have said I'd be hiding in Sherwood Forest with a rifle. Now I've got a wife and child, I might think, 'Keep your head down and hopefully it'll go away.' It's easy to think that the rise of fascism only happened in Germany, but you can see how quickly right-wing ideas can become popular. It's easy to blame everyone's problems on a group of people, and that's happening now." **Gabriel Tate**

SS-GB AIRS LATER THIS MONTH ON  
BBC ONE.



# holmes improvement

NOTHING ABOMINABLE HERE...

## SHERLOCK: SERIES 4 <sup>15</sup>

SHOW ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

2017 **OUT NOW** DVD, BD, Digital HD **EXTRAS** Featurettes, Video diaries

**A**s *Sherlock* returns, Holmes' cockiness is swiftly tested when he gets someone killed. It wouldn't, surely, run counter to Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat's none-more-meta Arthur Conan Doyle overhaul to read this as a reflection on the show's own issues: Series 3 edged into self-indulgence (terrific climax aside) and 2016's one-off special looked so smug, it practically screamed "punch me".

Yet just as Benedict Cumberbatch's Holmes rediscovers his strengths (solving mysteries, getting wasted) in this three-episode return, so Gatiss/Moffat reiterate their show's virtues.

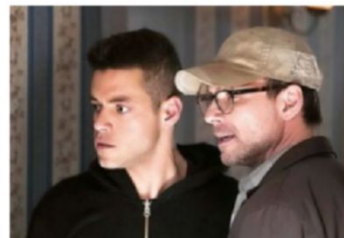
True, Series 4 isn't flawless: Gatiss' opener over-stretches to delay a twist. But it recovers as that shock challenges both the Holmes/Watson bond and the show, a challenge that Moffat's second episode rises to vigorously. Riffing on themes of monstrosity hiding in plain sight, 'The Lying Detective' is a flash-bastard show of dense daring:

Toby Jones' Jimmy Savile satire takes the biscuit barrel.

If episode three slashes plausibility, it still has high-tension fun. Revelling dizzily in rug-pulls, disguises and Sian Brooke's Hannibal-ish guest turn, 'The Final Problem' works by contrasting familial and thriller frameworks with "complicated little emotions", before landing – effectively – a series reset. Fond farewell or fresh start? After this sometimes daft, always entertaining run, you wouldn't put another comeback past *Sherlock*. **Kevin Harley**



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## MR. ROBOT: S2 <sup>18</sup>

SHOW ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

2016 **OUT NOW** DVD, BD, Digital HD **EXTRAS** Deleted scenes, Featurettes

**F**ollowing one of the best debut seasons since *Lost*, Sam Esmail's anarcho-hacker thriller suffers a near-catastrophic 404 in its second year. Rami Malek continues to impress as tech-genius Elliot, but is largely sidelined as supporting characters pad out the action with wearisome subplots that often lead nowhere. There are episodes of brain-bending brilliance, and a stonking mid-season twist, but it's a classic case of difficult second album syndrome. **Jordan Farley**



## THE WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION

SHOW ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

2016 **OUT NOW** DVD **EXTRAS** Making of, Featurettes, Gallery

**T**he BBC's previous Agatha Christie Christmas adap, *And Then There Were None*, was excellent – but the Beeb's outdone itself with *Witness*. Once again writer Sarah Phelps has deepened and darkened the original – even more so, since this time she's working from a 25-page short story. The courtroom scenes – a murder trial – are central, of course, but around them churns the life of 1923 London, a society still painfully scarred by the aftermath of WW1. The characters have a psychological complexity Christie rarely attained: Andrea Riseborough (that key witness) is compelling and Toby Jones, as the defence solicitor, is nothing short of heartbreaking. **Philip Kemp**



## THE MISSING: SERIES 2 <sup>15</sup>

SHOW ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

2016 **OUT NOW** DVD, BD **EXTRAS** Featurette, Gallery

**S**ibling scribblers Harry and Jack Williams build on their kidnapping drama's first series with a fiendishly plotted eight episodes that will keep you guessing. Starting with the reappearance of an army man's daughter after 11 years awol, the waters are soon muddled for investigator Julien Baptiste (Tchéky Karyo). An arresting, ambitious thriller with a classy ensemble (David Morrissey, Keeley Hawes). **Neil Smith**



## fresh spins

TF scores the latest soundtracks...



### ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY

★★★★☆

Drafted in at short notice, Michael Giacchino tools up nicely for the Rebellion. The melodies aren't quite John Williams-class, but welcome reserves of Williams homage light up 'Krennic's Aspirations', among others. Elsewhere, the military attack-mode pieces brim with brassy bluster and the emo-alternatives soar: 'Your Father Would Be Proud' would make wampas weep.



### WESTWORLD: SEASON 1

★★★★☆

Composer Ramin Djawadi (*Game Of Thrones*) makes a potentially clever-clever idea sing for TV's Michael Crichton upgrade. Haunting orch-tronic original cues and 'western-ised' covers (Morricone thrust, sloshed piano, dying squeezebox) of pop/rock classics are carefully blended: 'Paint It Black' gallops with gusto, 'No Surprises' fits the cowpoke context like spray-on chaps and 'Fake Plastic Trees' emotes beautifully.

## CLASSIC SOUNDTRACK



Kyle MacLachlan's Special Agent Cooper takes a moment to soak up some synths.



## twin peaks/fire walk with me

ANGELO BADALAMENTI / WARNER BROS / DEATH WALTZ

**H**itchcock and Herrmann, cherry pie and coffee. Some pairings seem fated to be. Although the composer Angelo Badalamenti was into his forties when he first worked with David Lynch, the duo fast forged a marriage in soundtrack heaven. Or, on Lynch's TV soap and its quasi-sequel, in the purgatorial hinterlands between terror and transcendence.

The duo's intuitive understanding first bloomed on 'Mysteries Of Love', a song written for *Blue Velvet*. Lynch's lyrics didn't obviously lend themselves to music, or vocals. But Badalamenti found the right suspended chords, Julee Cruise sang and the sublime result inspired continued collaborations on Cruise's lush debut album, *Floating Into The Night* (1989), and TV.

Seated at a piano while Lynch verbalised atmos-rich scenarios, director and composer worked closely on *Peaks* music. The result is a score deeply attuned to the show's twinned extremes: tragic/tender, sentimental/scary. The fall from the title theme's warm keys to the synth-drone zone of

'Laura Palmer's Theme' swiftly conveys the show's sensibility. Vintage violins rub against modern synths; dissonant jazz shimmies ('Audrey's Dance'), while finger-clickin' cool jazz ('Dance Of The Dream Man') contrasts with goofier pitches ('Freshly Squeezed').

Most potently, pastiche is deepened by raw feeling. Although Badalamenti references jazz, pop, country, noir, melodrama and avant-garde music, he never merely skates postmodern surfaces. Beauty is paramount, not least due to Cruise, her voice levitating with emotional purity.

The score's influence lingered like smoke, magnetising awards and famous fans in Moby, Bastille, Beach

House and Lana Del Rey. For the *Fire Walk With Me* score (celebrating its 25th anniversary with a vinyl reissue this year), Badalamenti followed it in the best way: not by repeating, but by enriching. Drawing on his Brooklyn roots, he deployed seasoned jazz-niks for murkier ends. The main theme sounds aching laments for incoming tragedies. After the lounge-lush 'The Pine Float', Jimmy Scott's cracked vocal imbues 'Sycamore Trees' with weathered poignancy.

Cruise's vocal adds melting sadness to 'Questions In A World Of Blue'; Badalamenti's monologue brings touches of beatnik-noir to 'A Real Indication'. But the highlights are the sulphurous lurch of 'The Pink Room' and the sweeter reverie of 'Moving Through Time': twin poles of darkness and light, beautifully realised by a director and composer whose coupling led to places both wonderful and strange. **Kevin Harley**





## adapt or die

IS THERE ANY HOPE LEFT FOR MOVIES BASED ON VIDEOGAMES?

**T**o say the recent *Assassin's Creed* film is one of the better videogame adaptations is to damn it with the faintest of praise. Many critics, *TF* included, thought this might be the one to finally break the game-to-film curse. The calibre of talent involved (*Macbeth*'s triumvirate of Michael Fassbender, Marion Cotillard and director Justin Kurzel, not to mention support from the likes of Jeremy Irons, Brendan Gleeson and Charlotte Rampling) certainly suggested so. With hindsight, we should probably have been paying closer attention to screenwriter Adam Cooper, whose recent CV boasts copper-bottomed non-classics such as *The Transporter Refueled* and the anaemic *Allegiant*. It's one thing to take an adaptation of popular material seriously, quite another to treat pulpy lore with such humourless reverence.

Yet not all of the blame can be apportioned to the script – and *Assassin's Creed* is hardly alone in its struggles to recreate the appeal of an interactive series in a passive medium. Games and films are two fundamentally distinct disciplines: what works in one rarely translates well to the other.

Most players don't like too much downtime: any game in which you can leave the controller untouched for several minutes is hardly playing to the strengths of the medium. As such, ensuring the player's active involvement often results in character development taking a back seat. And exposition becomes something of a necessary evil when a designer needs to set the kind of clear goals that motivate you to keep playing. Fassbender's Callum Lynch would probably work

well as a game protagonist – he's thinly sketched enough to allow the player to imprint themselves upon him, with just enough of a backstory to give them the motivation to seek revenge. The ability to inhabit a character is a shortcut to empathy, allowing you to invest in their journey relatively quickly. Films have to work harder to make you care.

*Creed*'s all-too-brief Inquisition sequences fare better than the present-day sections. When Aguilar is shanking goons and leaping between Andalucian awnings, Kurzel's film evokes the imagery of the games pretty well. But for all Fassbender's athletic attempts to mimic several of the series' signature moves and poses, watching assassins free-running

**ABOVE**  
Michael Fassbender's *Assassin's Creed* didn't end the wait for a great gaming movie. (below) The Rock in *Doom*.

across rooftops doesn't have the same impact as when you're doing it yourself. Remember the infamous first-person sequence in 2005's *Doom*? A cute tribute to the seminal shooter, sure, but it just made most viewers wish they had a controller in their hands.

Most blockbuster games are, at heart, empowerment fantasies, which don't tend to work so well if you're conflicted about your motivations – and, as such, are essentially anathema to ambiguity and complexity. But in recent years, we've seen games such as *Bioshock* show a willingness to confront the player's actions. Developer Naughty Dog has attracted some criticism for its use of cinematic technique rather than letting the systems sell the story, but its *Uncharted* series boasts some of the strongest, most nuanced writing in games. And indie developer Campo Santo recently sold the movie rights to its low-key drama *Firewatch*: a narrative-led experience that

has 'breakout Sundance hit' written all over it. The hoodoo hasn't been broken yet, then, but it mightn't be long before we can finally celebrate videogames' arrival as a cinematic force. **Chris Schilling**







ON  
DEMAND



## SANTA CLARITA DIET

SHOW ★★★★★

2017 AVAILABLE NOW | NETFLIX

If there's one truth in television right now, it's that shows will always find new ways to tell stories about the undead. And this Netflix original series about a zombie-like suburban mum really does feel genuinely, well, original. Its atonal clash between quirky comedy and repulsive bloodiness, all set against the backdrop of a sunny LA community, makes for refreshingly funny, if occasionally disorientating, viewing.

A strong stomach for shock gross-outs is needed early on, as Drew Barrymore's realtor Sheila suddenly projectile vomits mid-sentence before dying and mysteriously waking up again with a penchant for human flesh. Along with materialistic husband Joel (Timothy Olyphant) and acerbic teenage daughter Abby (Liv Hewson), Sheila gets caught up in a chain of gruesome events while trying to satisfy her most basic impulses.

### 'BURBS BITER

Sheila (Drew Barrymore) and Joel (Timothy Olyphant) ponder her new appetite for blood.

The show's key hook is in treating its horrors as matter-of-fact inconveniences, contrasting scenes of limb-chomping with the wholesome neighbourhood life in which it happens. But it's Olyphant who brings the funniest moments, as his dim-witted Joel struggles to adjust to his wife's new state. One choice moment sees him pausing mid-kill to admire a catalogue of utensils.

There's not a great deal of heart here, and you couldn't say *Santa Clarita* is overflowing with brains. But after a couple of inconsistent episodes, the offbeat, jet-black tone is firmly established and keeps the show shuffling forward. Tuck in. **Matt Looker**



### FRIEND REQUEST

15 ★★★★★

**10 FEB** | SKY  
When it-girl Alycia Debnam-Carey unfriends Liesl Ahlers, the rejected loner kills herself – and thus her revenge begins. Simon Verhoeven's #socialmediashocker delivers solid, loud scares, though the dialogue groans.



### BAD NEIGHBOURS 2

15 ★★★★★

**17 FEB** | SKY  
With Chloë Grace Moretz under-used and the dildo jokes over-done, the frat-com sequel leans heavily on original leads Seth Rogen, Rose Byrne and Zac Efron. Happily, they're on form – even Efron.



### THE GREASY STRANGLER

15 ★★★★★

**23 FEB** | SKY  
Daft, disgusting, offensive: yes, Jim Hosking's midnight movie-like comedy is a joy. Dishing up oiled-up OAPs, swinging dicks and disco trivia, Hosking riffs on father/son tensions with sly (and slightly stomach-turning) ingenuity.



### DEMOLITION

15 ★★★★★

**25 FEB** | SKY  
Jake Gyllenhaal demolishes his life... No, it's not a *Prince Of Persia* Making Of but Jean-Marc Vallée's tale of a widower who channels his grief into home destruction. Subtle? Like a bulldozer, but Gyllenhaal nails emo-dysfunction.



### I SAW THE LIGHT

15 ★★★★★

**26 FEB** | SKY  
Despite Tom Hiddleston being on top form, Marc Abraham's Hank Williams tribute stiffs. Rather than hailing the songwriting, Abraham labours lesser points: yes, watching someone drink himself to death is a slog. Who knew?



### MARLEY

15 ★★★★★

**OUT NOW** | AMAZON  
Martin Scorsese was pegged to direct this Bob Marley bio-doc, but he could hardly have bettered Kevin Macdonald's job. Mr. reggae's complexities are honoured so fulsomely, it won't matter how well you know 'Redemption Song'.



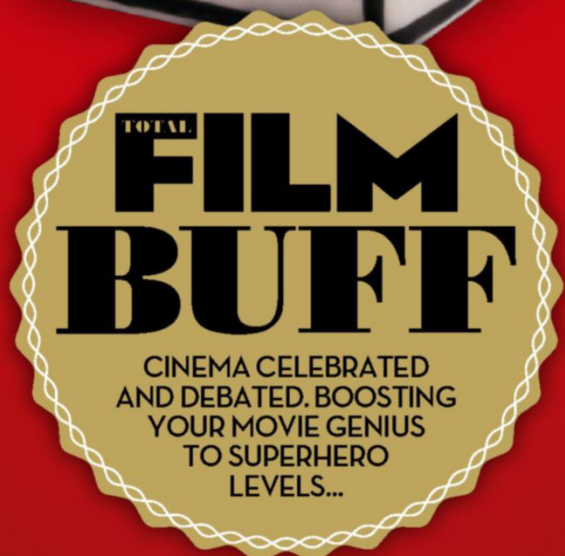
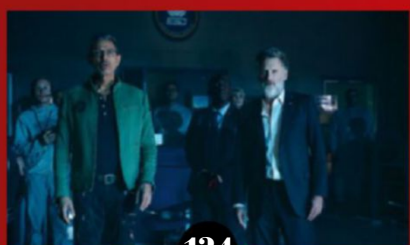
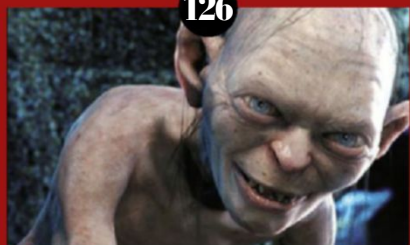
### THE BOURNE LEGACY

12 ★★★★★

**OUT NOW** | AMAZON  
Matt Damon's absence aside, Tony Gilroy's *Bourne 4* is no franchise smear. Jeremy Renner makes brisk work of his super-agent, while series vitals are energetically offered up.



EDITED BY JANE CROWTHER



this  
issue

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO US!  
DEATH WISH FISH  
RUNNING MEN (AND WOMEN)

DISASTROUS DISASTER MOVIES  
NOT SO MARVELLOUS  
A BEACH OF A SHOT

WE LOVE YOU. YOU KNOW  
I CARRIED A WATERMELON?  
ROGUE OR THE ONE?





# 20 YEARS AT THE MOVIES

As Total Film hits the two-decade mark, our milestone birthday has got us all misty-eyed, reflecting on how movies – and the way we experience them – have changed since February 1997. Join us for a rundown of the trends that have defined our lifetime.

WORDS JAMIE GRAHAM, KEVIN HARLEY, MATT MAYTUM, JAMES MOTTRAM

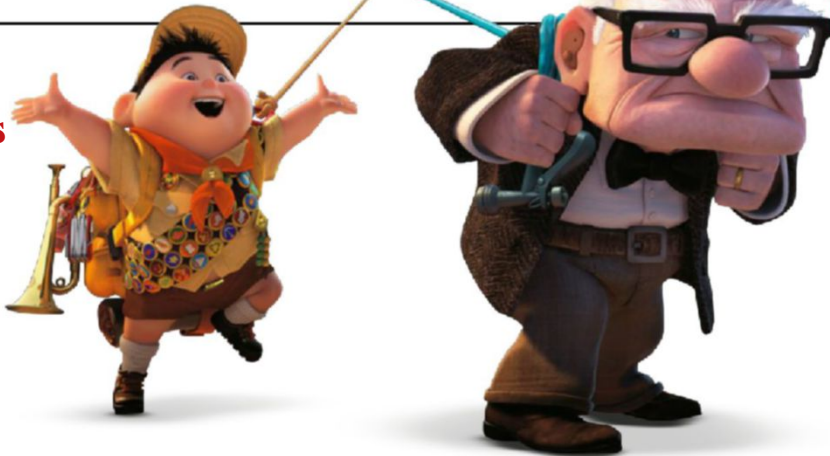




# THE BUSINESS

## DISNEY DOMINATES

Its post-'97 animated output wavered initially, but Disney's acquisition of Marvel, Lucasfilm and Pixar has made it the industry powerhouse.



## SPINNING OFF

A dearth of original films has given rise to more reboots, remakes, reimaginings, sequels, prequels and spin-offs than ever before.

## BILLION-DOLLAR MOVIES

*Titanic* was the first film to become a nine-figure grosser, in 1997. Since then, 27 more films have passed \$1bn, most recently *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*.

## DOGME DAYS

The manifesto arrived in '95, with Thomas Vinterberg's *Festen* launching the movement in '98. The stripped-back aesthetic still inspires.

## STEPPING UP

As the Big Name Director declines, indie auteurs are now sought for big-budget franchises, presumably in pursuit of the next Nolan...

## THE GREY POUND

The neglected older generation of cinemagoers became a sought-after audience with the likes of 2012's *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*.



## UNIVERSES EXPAND

Spearheaded by Marvel, bog-standard sequels no longer cut it: the expanded universe (with crossovers galore) is where it's at.



## WHY YA?

Young Adult lit proved highly lucrative with *Twilight* and *The Hunger Games*, but lesser imitators quickly quashed its appeal.

## BRAND POWER

As original filmmaking became a gamble, everything from videogames and toys to theme-park rides became sources of desirable 'brand recognition'.

## CULT VALUE

Late '90s indies such as *Memento*, *Magnolia*, *Donnie Darko*, *Eternal Sunshine...* and *Being John Malkovich* showcased original voices and became insta-cult classics.



## GEEK POWER

Fan culture is no longer the preserve of comic-book stores and stuffy basements. Geeks went mainstream, and Hollywood has taken notice.



## BROADENING BOX OFFICE

A film's US gross is no longer the sole measure of success; the flourishing market in China is hugely influential.

## PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT

In the '80s and '90s, star power was everything, as names such as Schwarzenegger, Stallone, Douglas and Costner meant boffo box office. But in the past two decades, the studios have re-focused. Rather than creating mid-range star-vehicles, execs have put their dollars into snapping up existing properties and building multi-film franchises. With ensemble-driven series such as *Harry Potter*, *Star Wars* and *Fifty Shades Of Grey* all driven by brand recognition and fan loyalty, the idea of a studio tentpole propped up by an A-lister alone now feels consigned to Hollywood history.







## RISE OF THE SUPERHERO

3 May 2002: the day Sam Raimi's *Spider-Man* hit cinemas and the superhero movie changed for good. Yes, Bryan Singer's *X-Men* had already proved the spandex could get serious, but Raimi's \$821m-grosser was the number one hit of the year. Fuelled by CGI advances, the rise of Comic-Con and internet fandom – not to mention Marvel and, to a lesser extent, DC getting their shit together – comic-book heroes became cinema's new cash-cow. Now, post-*Avengers*, we're talking billions, not millions.

## 9/11'S IMPACT

*United 93* and *World Trade Center* confronted events head on, while any fictional scenes of mass destruction held unavoidable resonance.

## FANTASY FEAST

Fantasy became big business with *The Lord Of The Rings* and *Harry Potter*, shedding its stigma for being nerdy and impenetrable.



## ELEMENT OF SURPRISE

As the film release slate becomes ever more crowded, surprise drops from *Cloverfield* and *Blair Witch* are savoured.



## DOCUMENTARIES CROSS OVER

Documentaries once seemed like cinema's starchy option, there to inform and educate. But Michael Moore (*Fahrenheit 9/11*) popularised pointed docu-making and the form bloomed, aided by developments in digi-cameras and editing software. Big docs have been variously political, personality-led, musical, mystery-driven, penguin-centric and sushi-flavoured. High-rankers in TF's lifetime include *Super Size Me*, *Catfish*, *An Inconvenient Truth* and Werner Herzog's fantastic journeys. Among other big-name directors refreshed by the real, Ron Howard's recent Beatles doc was his liveliest film in years.



## THE CON IS ON

Comic-Con's been around since 1970, but in the past (superhero-dominated) 20 years it's become increasingly important for film fans.

## JAMES BOND BOUNCES BACK

Bond movies were in decent shape after *GoldenEye*, until *Die Another Day* ruined everything. Craig and *Casino Royale* rescued 007's credibility.

## ROCK STARS SCORE

We've watched the rise and rise of the rock star soundtrack composers – see Clint Mansell, Cliff Martinez, Hans Zimmer, Junkie XL, Jonny Greenwood...



## RATED R FOR RUDE

Spunky hair gel, pie-humping, mankinis... the era ushered in new levels of comedy filth, with women now behaving badly among the bromances.

## SEX ON SCREEN

Boundaries for sex on screen have been broken, with *Intimacy*, *The Brown Bunny*, *Shortbus* and *9 Songs* capturing unsimulated acts.



## HORROR EVOLVES

When the first issue of *Total Film* hit shelves in February 1997, *Scream* was just weeks old in the US and would not open in the UK until May. Horror had been effectively dead throughout the '90s. And then – it's alive! Self-reflexive genre pics gave way to bone-freezing J-horrors and eerie ghost stories and found-footage stomach-churners and fleet-footed zombies and torture porn and glittery vampires and more, much more. Twenty years on, horror remains a screaming success.





## BRIT-FILM BOOM

*Trainspotting* was a year old when *TF* launched; *Lock, Stock And Two Smoking Barrels* would arrive a year later. The British were coming, moving away from the twin staples of period films and social realism to prepare the way for the current Brit New Wave of Wheatley, McQueen, Arnold, Barnard, Hogg, Glazer, Strickland et al. Film4 Productions flexed, Big Talk Productions and Warp Films became players, and facilities swelled as Leavesden Studios opened in 2012 and Pinewood Studios started its expansion in 2015.



## FOUND IN TRANSLATION

In our lifetime we've witnessed foreign-language films transform from arty student staple to mainstream option: see *Amélie*, *Crouching Tiger*, Studio Ghibli.

## ACTION RE-BOURNE

Matt Damon was the era's definitive action hero: a smart everyman with inventive moves, political relevance and camera-shaking intensity.

## 12A ARRIVES

*The Bourne Identity* was the first to get the BBFC's new rating, giving blockbusters room for edginess without restricting their audience.

## GANGSTER GEEZERS

Guy Ritchie's since proven himself adaptable to numerous genres, but his firecracker debut *Lock, Stock...* inspired all manner of swaggering imitators.

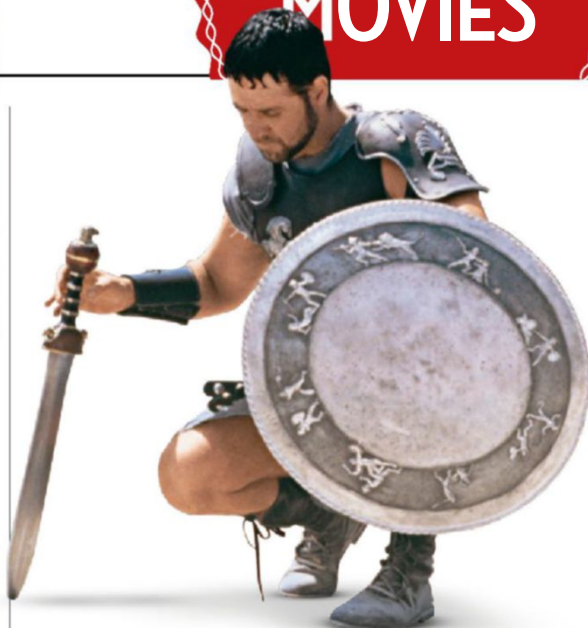


## CENSORSHIP RELAXES

Post-BBFC director James Ferman, bans and guidelines were relaxed. Odd to think *The Exorcist* and *Texas Chain Saw* weren't on video when *TF* launched.

## THE FORCE REAWAKENS

*Star Wars* returning has twice been big news in *Total Film*'s lifetime, even if the prequels threatened to destroy Lucas' legacy.



## SWORDS 'N' SANDALS

*Gladiator* gave the histori-actioner a shot of adrenaline, even if the genre has since struggled (*Ben-Hur* stank).

## DISASTER STRIKES GOLD

VFX advances, environmental fears and Roland Emmerich's dedication have kept the disaster movie propped up, much to critics' chagrin.

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

There's still some way to go, but same-sex relationships have gradually become more prevalent on screen, even gaining Academy attention.

## HEROINE ADDICTION

There's been a recent resurgence of the tough, resourceful action heroine (Katniss, Rey, Jyn), perhaps thanks to a generation raised on *Ripley*.



## GERI-ACTION

Liam Neeson, Sly Stallone, Arnold Schwarzenegger and even Dame Helen Mirren have given villains a (grey) pounding.

## MEXICAN WAVE

Cuarón and Iñárritu break big, from *Y Tu Mamá También* and *Amores Perros*, to *Harry Potter* and Oscar domination.



## FILM BUFF

### POPCORN GOES PRETENTIOUS

Sweet or salted? Nowadays it's more like sea-salted caramel latte or spicy sriracha. And what the hell happened to toffee Poppets?



### FOCUS ON HI-DEF

With digital advances have come 4K (a high resolution now available on TV), HDR and higher frame-rates (with mixed results).

### TV'S GOLDEN AGE

The likes of *The Sopranos*, *The Wire*, *Breaking Bad* and *Game Of Thrones* have challenged cinema with long-form thrills.



### CGI PREVAILS

No, computer-generated imagery isn't new. Early uses included a robot's-eye view in 1973's *Westworld*; just prior to *TF*, *Terminator 2* and *Jurassic Park* dazzled. Since then, its shiny over-use has been much debated. But CGI's high watermarks have offered eye-watering realisations of other worlds/wonders: consider *The Matrix*'s bullet limbo, *Apes*' tactile fur, *Avatar*'s bio-luminescent flush, *Interstellar*'s wormholes or *Gravity*'s spin-cycle thrills. And it needn't distract when woven into a film's fabric, as in the seamless '70s San Francisco of David Fincher's *Zodiac*.

### DAWN OF DIGITAL

Purists might favour celluloid, but digital camera tech and its democratising power has proved unstoppable (especially in the smartphone age).



### PHONE PERIL

Twenty years ago, you were wish if you had a cordless phone in your house. Now mobiles are everywhere, infuriating cinemagoers worldwide.

### IMAX GOES BIG

IMAX has existed for decades, but where it was once reserved for science museums, it's now the BIG screen format.

### SEAT SAVIOUR

Remember queuing around the block, *hoping* you'd get in? Online booking has taken away the thrill and disappointment of the pre-allocated seating days.

### GET SMARTPHONE

Phones/tablets aren't just portable screens: they've changed how we discuss films, book tickets, watch trailers and annoy fellow cinemagoers.

### LOCAL ADS LEAVE

When did you last see your local bowling alley or curry house advertised before the film?

### SITE SEEING

The unstoppable march of the internet – IMDb, Rotten Tomatoes, blogs and social media – radically changed the face of movie discourse.



### THE WAY WE WATCH

Videostores are extinct, with the home viewer offered any number of streaming services, VOD options or movie channels to fill the void.

### INTERNET INFLUENCE

The internet made movies more accessible and interactive than ever – from viral campaigns, to crowd-funding, to stars on social media.

## THE FACES

CHRISTOPHER NOLAN

MATT DAMON & BEN AFFLECK

KEANU REEVES



HEATH LEDGER

LEONARDO DICAPRIO

ROBERT DOWNEY JR.

SCARLETT JOHANSSON

TOM CRUISE

SACHA BARON COHEN

DANNY BOYLE

NATALIE PORTMAN

MATTHEW MCCONAUGHEY



# THE TECH

## DISC ANALYSIS

DVD and Blu-ray might soon be supplanted by streaming, but discs have dominated the past 20 years, with featurettes, commentaries and, yep, scene selection.

## ART OF THE TEASE

Trailers nowadays offer spoilers, teaser-teases and TMI. While *The Phantom Menace* trailer launched with *The Siege* (!), *The Force Awakens* hit laptops.



## TIME OUT

Bum-numbing running times now come as standard. What was the last tentpole you saw that clocked in under 90 mins?



## BOXSET BINGES

In 1997, you watched one episode per week. Thanks to DVD boxsets and later Netflix, binge-watching sessions became the norm.

## BIG SMALL SCREENS

The size of 'small' screens has changed drastically, from 60-inch flatscreens in living rooms to smartphones/tablets viewed on the go.

## NEW DIMENSIONS

In our lifetime, 3D had a huge revival, thanks to *Avatar*. Interest has waned, but 4DX experiences continue to intrigue.

## CINEMA CLUBS

Multiplexes started offering special screenings for kids, pensioners and parents who don't want their screaming baby to stop them seeing the latest movies.



## ANIMATION REINVENTED

*Toy Story* landed a year before *TF*, changing the animation landscape forever. Any number of rivals now challenge Pixar.

## PROJECTION MANAGEMENT

Another digital advance: projection. Purists might scoff, but that hasn't stopped the tech becoming widespread, as old-school projectionists decline.



## MOCAP ADVANCES

Performance capture began in videogames, but Andy Serkis' pioneering work as Gollum helped acting to transcend physical constraints.

## MULTIPLEX MONOPOLY

As multiscreen behemoths pop up in every town across the land, independent cinemas have struggled, but luxury boutique screens offer an alternative.

## THE WAIT IS OVER

Online piracy fears and improved digital distribution slashed release windows, both between US and UK launches, and cinema and home entertainment.

GEORGE CLOONEY

BRAD PITT

ANGELINA JOLIE

RUSSELL CROWE

JAKE GYLLENHAAL

CHARLIZE THERON

KEIRA KNIGHTLEY

WILL FERRELL

KATE WINSLET

J.J. ABRAMS

JOSS WHEDON

DWAYNE JOHNSON

JUDD APATOW

P.T. ANDERSON

GUY RITCHIE





## INVESTIGATION

# IS IT BOLLOCKS?

Film Buff investigates the facts behind outlandish movie plots.

THIS MONTH CAN GREAT WHITE SHARKS HOLD A GRUDGE?



Q

In *Jaws*, a white pointer with a taste for humans becomes fixated on scoffing Chief Brody, salty seadog Quint and shark specialist Matt Hooper. Realistic?

A

**GEORGE H. BURGESS**, DIRECTOR, THE FLORIDA PROGRAM FOR SHARK RESEARCH AND INTERNATIONAL SHARK ATTACK FILE, FLORIDA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY.

Spielberg and [writer *Peter*] Benchley are to be applauded for wonderful acts of fiction – but the notion that sharks are driven by revenge is nonsense. If you look at it from a statistical average, last year we had 76 attacks worldwide and four resulted in death. The type of attacks are what we'd refer to as hit-and-runs. They're primarily mistaken identity, where the shark interprets the splashing of humans as normal prey. It's more luck and error than cognitive intent. There's no evidence of a shark becoming a 'man-eater' after getting a taste of a human – very rarely do we see a shark attack more than one person. Sharks don't make a connect in their tiny little brain: "Oh yeah, they taste good." Most times when sharks see a human they go the other way, they aren't an organism they're familiar with. I say "tiny little brain" because the driving force is its sensory functions, the olfactory bulb, just taking them from one meal to the next. The idea that they'd leap on a boat to eat a particular target is absolute nonsense.

**VERDICT BOLLOCKS**

## ALTERNATIVE BOX OFFICE

THE BIGGEST BLOCKBUSTER MOVIES...  
WITH MISLEADING 'VALENTINE' TITLES



|    |                                           |          |
|----|-------------------------------------------|----------|
| 1  | Fast & Furious (2009)                     | \$363.2M |
| 2  | Catch Me If You Can (2002)                | \$352.1M |
| 3  | Deep Impact (1998)                        | \$349.5M |
| 4  | Wanted (2008)                             | \$341.4M |
| 5  | Close Encounters Of The Third Kind (1977) | \$303.8M |
| 6  | Babe (1995)                               | \$254.1M |
| 7  | Click (2006)                              | \$237.7M |
| 8  | Non-Stop (2014)                           | \$222.8M |
| 9  | From Paris With Love (2010)               | \$52.8M  |
| 10 | Kiss Kiss Bang Bang (2005)                | \$15.8M  |

## ON LOCATION

REEL SPOTS BEHIND THE CAMERA



**WHAT?** During his pursuit of serial killer Dr. Lecter through the streets of Florence, in *Hannibal*, Chief Inspector Rinaldo Pazzi (Giancarlo Giannini) pauses to wash his hands in a porcine fountain.

**WHERE?** The south side of the Loggia del Mercato Nuovo, in Florence, Italy.

**GO?** Il Porcellino ('the little pig', though he's actually a boar) bronze fountain is said to bring luck to those who rub his snout and put a coin in his mouth, if the water washes the coin out and into the grating beneath. So expect a queue, if not for *Hannibal* re-enactments, for snout-fondling. *Thanks to Andy Newton*

Snapped yourself at a film location? Send us the details at [totalfilm@futurenet.com](mailto:totalfilm@futurenet.com)



TOP 10

# FOOT CHASES

Catch 'em if you can...



01

## POINT BREAK

Homaged so lovingly in *Hot Fuzz*, Kathryn Bigelow's Reeves and Reagan run-off is the gold standard of movie foot chases. From its flame-thrower start, through alleys, gardens, a pile of washing and a dog, to the LA viaduct and *that* firing into the air moment, it's sublime.



02

## THE BOURNE ULTIMATUM

Having already redefined the action-thriller genre with its bruising shakycam, *Bourne* saved its tautest set-piece for the threequel, with Matt Damon balcony-jumping his way across Tangiers in pursuit of hitman Desh (Joey Ansah).

## CASINO ROYALE

Kicking off his 007 tenure with a sturdy nod to Jason Bourne, Daniel Craig hotfoots it after parkour pioneer Sébastien Foucan. Showing a brazen disregard for hard hat rules, the pair monkey-man their way around a Madagascan building site's girders and cranes.



03

## THE THIRD MAN

Robert Krasker won his Cinematography Oscar for this noir classic, and the chase through Vienna's sewers, full of tilted silhouettes and bags of menace shows why, despite Orson Welles going full diva and insisting the tunnels were rebuilt at Shepperton Studios.



04



05

## NARC

For handycam brutality, Joe Carnahan's opener takes some topping. As Jason Patric's cop chases a junkie in Detroit, the camera rocks violently, while sound is grimly sparse: heavy breathing, gurgling blood, screaming. You won't forget its horrific climax in a hurry...



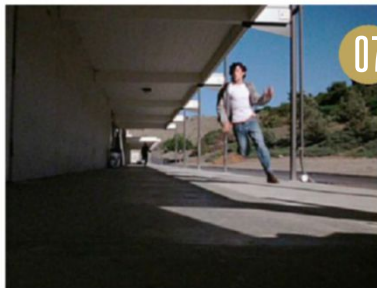
06

## THE MATRIX

With Sydney doubling for the Wachowskis' Mega City, Keanu Reeves' Neo dashes from subway to high-rise, making slo-mo binbag leaps, dodging knife-flinging grannies and getting tips from his on-call satnav - "The door on your left. No, your *other* left!"

## BRICK

The high-school noir that made big-screen names of Joseph Gordon-Levitt and director Rian Johnson is most memorable for its stripped-back chase in which JGL's Brendan evades a stab-happy drug dealer. Just try to avoid tensing up as those footsteps get louder...



07

## SE7EN

It never rains but it pours for Brad Pitt's Mills in what's arguably David Fincher's finest feature film. Stalking John Doe through a bleak, washed-out apartment block and out into the deluge on the street, Mills gets soaked like never before, and still doesn't get his man.



08



09

## RAISING ARIZONA

Nappies don't come cheap. So Nic Cage's ex-con, stocking up for the quintuplet he's also nicked, goes for the pantyhosed robbery option in the Coens' screwball caper. Cue trigger-happy cops, crazed shop assistants and an ever-growing pack of dogs giving chase.



10

## KUNG FU HUSTLE

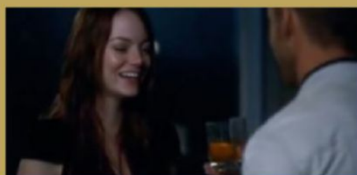
Sing, played by writer-director-star Stephen Chow, and Yuen Qui's flip-flopped, perma-smoking Landlady, in hot pursuit, go fully Looney Tunes as they hit the highway, complete with Road Runner-style spinning blurry legs. Absolutely nuts. **AW**



## FLIXOLOGY OLD FASHIONED

### CRAZY STUPID LOVE

Ryan Gosling's lothario starts seducing Emma Stone with this signature cocktail before re-enacting *Dirty Dancing*.



**INGREDIENTS** Bourbon, sugar cube, Angostura bitters, orange slice and a splash of water.

**MIX** Start by dropping in the sugar cube. Add bitters to the cube until it's stained, add a splash of water, muddle. Add ice (a super-large ice cube is best), a measure of bourbon and a slice of orange. Drink. Doing 'the lift' afterwards is optional.

## HINDSIGHT CORNER:

Stars eat their words...



### DEV PATEL

#### THE LAST AIRBENDER (2010)

**JULY 2010:** "When I saw it for the first time I was just like, 'Wow.' It surpassed what I thought it would look like... it was really fun."

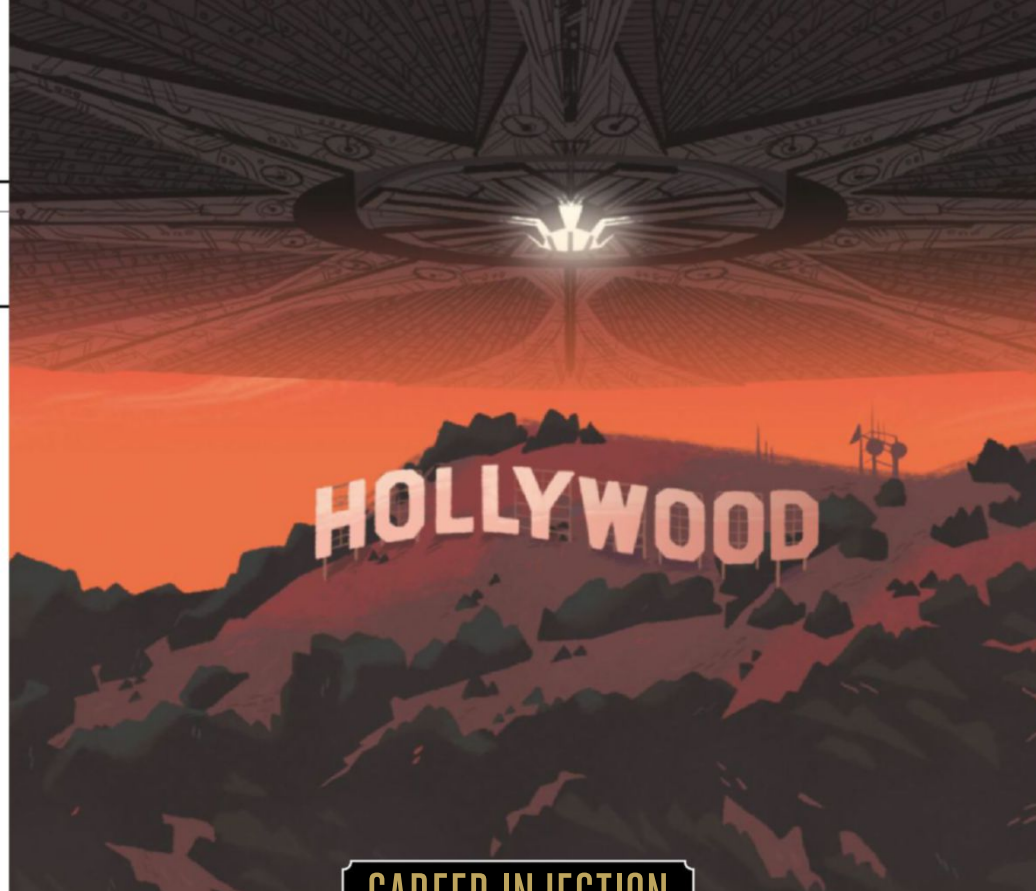
**DECEMBER 2016:** "I saw a stranger on the screen I couldn't relate to... I felt overwhelmed. I felt like I wasn't being heard. That was really scary, and that's really when I learned the power of 'no'."

## PLAIN TALKING

Learn the movie lingo

### THIS MONTH: DUTCH TILT

A camera angle on the wonk to convey discombobulation and disorientation that was widely used in German Expressionist cinema and came to be known as 'Deutsch' and then 'Dutch'. Carol Reed's Vienna-set *The Third Man* (1949) features numerous examples of the angle, which can also be called 'oblique' and 'canted'.



## CAREER INJECTION

# DISASTER MOVIES

Once a mighty wave, now a trickle. Has the disaster movie finally sated our appetite for destruction?

There's a storm coming, but don't hold your breath. Dean Devlin's directorial debut, *Geostorm*, began shooting in 2014. It boasts stars (Gerard Butler, Ed Harris), pertinent climate themes and a director with genre previous – he's produced/written for disaster-master Roland Emmerich. But news of reshoots means *Geostorm* won't strike until – earliest – October 2017. It raises a question: after their '70s peak and 2000s revival, have disaster movies lost their puff? Precious few big disaster-blasters have delivered lately. *Independence Day: Resurgence* made less than half of its 1996 predecessor's box-office haul; *The Finest Hours* was a rare Disney flop; *San Andreas* scored box office-wise, but the critics' splat of 48 per cent on Rotten Tomatoes isn't unfair. As for *Pompeii* – down with it.

As interest declines in disaster pics, pixel-based escalation isn't helping. Without strong foundations – script, character, tension – even the biggest spectacles can end in ruins. Yes, we loved *Independence Day*'s death-raised White House and *Cloverfield*'s Statue of Liberty stunt. Yes, ties to spectacle stretch back to 1913's *Atlantis* and 1928's *Noah's Ark*. But we're now inured to

destructo-porn money shots.

The mighty wave in *San Andreas* and the ocean-straddling spaceship in *Resurgence* met with disinterest. Perhaps Emmerich screwed the genre: where's left to go after you screech over the top, as he did with 2012?

If an *ID3* is coming, maybe it should embrace *Resurgence*'s closing tease and get off-planet. Earth is screwed in *Interstellar* and *Avatar*, leaving humanity to find another home. Both suggest our planetary doom is inevitable – and where's the dramatic tension in inevitability? Whether we're resigned to that or depressed, the conclusion is clear: the genre's template needs refreshing or re-framing.

Casting leads we care about is one workable remedy: consider Leo 'n' Kate in *Titanic* or Naomi Watts and Ewan McGregor in *The Impossible*. Another is to refresh the oft-mocked clichés by splicing them with other genres; consider the sci-fi-slanted *Take Shelter*, or the family melodrama of *Force Majeure*, which reinvigorated the genre's ability to surprise. Without that surprise, even the loudest spectacles of destruction simply provoke yawns – or parody. And who wants *Disaster Movie* to have the last laugh? **KH**

## FIVE POINT FIX

**1** Think small. From *The Impossible* to *The Wave*, the best recent disaster-blasters have been character-focused.

**2** Cast acutely. The genre demands elements of anchoring human vulnerability. In short: maybe not *The Rock*.

**3** Dole out the spectacle carefully. Character and drama are what keep us watching, not gym-pumped catastrophe.

**4** Hybridise. Even a genre so familiar can startle if reframed as sci-fi (*Cloverfield*) or otherwise.

**5** Be serious. *The Impossible* proved that, without stock characters and survivalist hounds, disaster movies can command respect.



"Wait, remind me what  
we're doing in this one.  
Ah yep, that again..."



IS IT JUST ME...

# OR ARE ALL MARVEL CINEMATIC UNIVERSE MOVIES THE SAME?

asks Matt Glasby

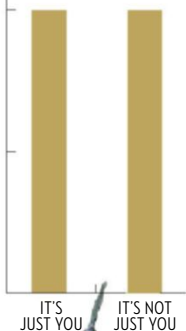
**M**arvel does it again!" squealed the early reviews for *Doctor Strange*. And that, old friends, is entirely the problem. Though neither expert nor aficionado, I've seen nine out of the 14 MCU films to date, including both *Avengers* (though I could barely finish *Age Of Bloat-ron*), the "good" one (*Guardians Of The Galaxy*), 1.5 *Captain Americas* and innumerable *Iron Men*. Frankly, even if Marvel pres Kevin Feige isn't done, I certainly am.

Shiny, samey and surprisingly cheap-looking, the films are increasingly hard to tell apart from each other – as are the villains. Is that Ultron or the Destroyer? A Chitauri or a Dark Elf? Tom Hiddleston with stupid plastic horns or Lee Pace with mascara issues?

And the heroes don't fare much better. Forever popping up in each other's movies, there are so many of these dicks on the dance floor that even well-paid performers such as Jeremy Renner complain about having pretty much nothing to do. And don't get me started on the sexist sidelining of Scarlett Johansson's *Black Widow*...

Full of CG armies battling poorly disguised stunt doubles, the action scenes are weightless and wipe-clean; the dialogue sharp but so painfully self-aware (Tony Stark: "The Avengers. That's what we call ourselves; we're sort of like a team. 'Earth's Mightiest Heroes' type thing") that you never forget you're watching a movie – a movie about characters who know that they're in one. If that floats your boat, fine; there are worse ways to spend two

OFFICE-OMETER  
THE TF STAFF VERDICT IS IN!



hours (and the rest). But it's not what I go to the cinema for. Shouldn't escapism allow you to actually escape?

Less a series of comic-book adaptations than a cartoon without end, the MCU plays out in instalments that inevitably finish back where they began. Cities may crumble, but our heroes always triumph; Earth may be at stake, but the outcome is always assured. There's no jeopardy: no one (major) dies, cries or, really, seems to care very much about what's going on.

The *Dark Knight* series may have been, essentially, a guy twatting about in a cape, but at least Bruce Wayne was fallible, changeable, human. The MCU may be consistent, but it's their universe, not ours.

Share your reaction at [www.gamesradar.com/totalfilm](http://www.gamesradar.com/totalfilm) or on Facebook and Twitter.

## LAST MONTH WAS LUCAS RIGHT TO DELETE THE EWOK SONG?

RUSS NOBLE

The original ewok song is how I remember it and no matter how good, the new one can't replace it. Directors shouldn't tinker with what's been released.

KEVIN SUTPHIN

I think it was the one justified change.

MATT VITKA

Agreed. Yub Nub is terrible.

JONFEN PARKER

This is ridiculous, Yub Nub is amazing.

DANIEL TAYLOR

Should have deleted all the ewoks as well.



AL ZARAGOX

The '97 version is far superior. In terms of orchestration, it also has a warm and melancholic feeling of peace, sacrifice and triumph. But I still

prefer the original release as it was intended to be, with all its flaws.

M-A C DAVIS

Back in '83, Yub Nub was the perfect ending.



**THE BIG SHOT**

# THE DUNKIRK DEVASTATION IN ATONEMENT

**C**harred skies, ragged sails, drunken sailors staggering across shrapnel-scorched sands... Joe Wright's

*Atonement* reaches its bathetic pinnacle on the beaches of Dunkirk, where James McAvoy's shell-shocked Robbie sleepwalks through a waking nightmare of colour-bleached horror.

The scene was originally envisioned as a complicated series of shots that captured the full terror of the Battle of Dunkirk. With just one day to shoot at Redcar beach in Yorkshire, though, Wright opted for a single, unbroken, five-minute take, meticulously planned but a mammoth task for all involved – not least Steadicam operator Peter Robertson, who shouldered a

Panavision Panaflex Millennium XL and hopped on and off a golf-cart-style 'mule' vehicle to navigate the location. "It was a case of necessity being the mother of invention," says Wright, who deployed over 1,000 extras and rehearsed for 11 hours before cameras rolled at 5.30pm. "I must have walked the route 150 times," he marvels.

Concessions were made for the budget. Wright originally wanted \$4m extra to include the book's air attacks by the Stukas, but was refused ("I'm not giving you more than \$30m for an art film," was producer Tim Bevan's rebuke). The sequence is all the more disquieting for its gently deployed dread. The unconventional use of the Panavision 17.5-34mm short zoom



allowed DoP Seamus McGarvey to push in close on Robbie's ashen face, then pull back wide on his parched surroundings. "This lens gave us the optical range to see the set in all its glory without distorting the faces at close quarters," says Robertson.

Exhausted during the fourth take, he stumbled at the bandstand, rendering the shot unusable. Luckily, Robertson had already captured a near-perfect third take, which was used in the final film. With Christopher Nolan staging his own historical recreation in this July's *Dunkirk* (shooting on both IMAX 65mm and 65mm large-format photography), he'll be hard-pressed to match the visceral punch of Wright's iconic sequence. **JW**





A LIFE IN PICTURES

# CARRIE FISHER

At the end of 2016, the world bid a sad farewell to the actress best known as Star Wars' Princess Leia. But outside those galactic adventures, Carrie Fisher's wit and warmth resonated in a variety of projects. Total Film remembers a truly unique voice.

WORDS KEVIN HARLEY





## SHAMPOO 1975

Carrie Fisher's mother, Debbie Reynolds, apparently wanted a rude word cut from her daughter's film debut. But Fisher played her teen cameo in Warren Beatty's satire like someone who brooked no censorship. Flirty, forthright and very funny over two scenes as tennis-playing Lorna, Fisher talks rings around Beatty (and lacerates her on-screen mother) before dropping the f-bombshell: "You wanna fuck?"



## STAR WARS: EPISODES IV-VI 1977-83

Aside from advising Daisy Ridley "not to go through the crew like wildfire", Fisher's other sagely advice to the saga newcomer went thus: "Keep fighting against that slave outfit." Fisher didn't only beat 26 name actresses to the role of Princess Leia. She also battled wardrobe and script issues to turn the royal rebel into a figure of fire and feeling: her co-stars had blasters and lightsabers, but they couldn't match Fisher's laser-guided way with a passionate put-down or a killer one-liner.

Lucas' under-powered direction ("faster" or "more intense" were about the sum of it) wasn't Fisher's only problem on *Episode IV*. As if having to have her breasts gaffer-taped down wasn't enough ("because there's no underwear in space"), she had to do so beneath an "unbelievably idiotic hairstyle", as she described it in the memoir *Wishful Drinking*. Yet she held her own in the boys-in-space club, whether she's dissing Moff Tarkin's

grand pong or blowing holes in damsel-in-distress clichés during Han and Luke's amateur-hour rescue. In *The Empire Strikes Back*, she was aghast that Harrison Ford got to rewrite his lines in their farewell scene while she did not. Yet she sells the emotional shit out of the moment, just as she turned a head-scratching line about a "nerf-herder" into a piquant put-down.

Approaching *Jedi*, she asked Lucas to give Leia a "drinking problem"; some kind of character development, at least. Instead, Lucas gave her a metal bikini. "What supermodels will eventually wear in the seventh ring of Hell," she quipped. Yet she turned that to her advantage by refusing to let a stunt double strangle Jabba and milking the moment with great humour afterwards. "That chain only 'enslaved' me until I could use the frabjous thing to KILL THAT DROOLING SWOLLEN SUPERTONGUED SLUG & whirl him off into infinity," she tweeted. "Fearless and inventive?" Damn straight.





## THE BLUES BROTHERS 1980

"We had a blast shooting that," Fisher recalled. The fun translated to screen as she reiterated her way with a fiery, funny put-down. John Landis' comedy began production sans script but Fisher packed a full fusillade of sly wit into her knowing cameo as John Belushi's ex, gun hip-hoisted as she lets rip: "You miserable slug!" Suck that, laser brain.



## WHEN HARRY MET SALLY... 1989

Fisher spent much of the '80s flexing her comic character-actor chops. Meg Ryan and Billy Crystal were the leads in Rob Reiner's Nora Ephron-scripted romcom, but a place in fans' hearts is occupied by Marie (Fisher), Sally's sharp-shooting BFF. Ryan had to gasp and moan for effect but it only took Fisher an arched eyebrow to convey Marie's sardonic smarts. Landing every line with aplomb ("You mean Joe's available?"), she leaves no wagon-wheel table unscathed and spikes every second with scene-stealing details: the kink she leaves on a married ("Married?!") man's card in her Rolodex is a lovely touch.



## SCREAM 3 2000

A meta-movie became multi-meta as Fisher, drawing deep on her cigarette and her wry reserves of self-awareness, delivered a partly self-scripted cameo as ex-actress Bianca Burnette. Jeering waspishly about how she lost the Leia role to another actress (the one who slept with Lucas) and threatening to tell her co-star just what she thinks of her, Fisher's wit is weapons-grade.



## MAPS TO THE STARS 2014

"Is that Carrie?" Sure is. Just as Billy Wilder cast Hollywood old-timers as Tinseltown vets in his caustic *Sunset Boulevard*, so David Cronenberg did in his twisted celebrity satire. Playing a version of herself as a movie old-hand, Fisher adds insider intrigue to Bruce Wagner's deep-biting script and – echoing *Postcards From The Edge* – extra layers to the film's mummy-dearest themes.

## POSTCARDS FROM THE EDGE 1990

After a Percodan overdose in 1985, Fisher was prescribed lithium, which she said slowed her down. When she kicked the drug and took up writing, the result was a semi-autobiographical novel about a wisecracking, post-overdose actress' relationship with a domineering mother. "I'm not shocked that people think it's about me and my mother," she said. "It's easier for them to think I have no imagination for language, just a tape recorder with endless batteries." In fact, Fisher's bottomless supply of richly imagined, razor-sharpened jibes turned 1987's *Postcards From The Edge* into a bestseller. And she turned the novel into a film script so sharp, it took Meryl Streep and Shirley MacLaine firing on all screen-hogging cylinders to stage it. More writing work ensued, ranging from fearless memoirs to work as a script doctor on films including *Hook*, *The River Wild* and *The Wedding Singer* – Adam Sandler's finest. Coincidence? Surely not.







## STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS 2015

Fisher invested the smallest line readings with straight-firing smarts, as even a 14-second *Episode VII* deleted scene proved. “Not all the senators think I’m insane,” Leia whispers to a Resistance aide, conspiratorially: “Or maybe they do. I don’t really care.” Echoing *Episode IV*’s exasperated Leia, the scene’s low-key self-awareness beautifully matches the tone of Leia and Han’s reunion, a poignant meeting made all the more believable for its restraint. Fisher was too savvy for sentimentality, although as Leia’s self-declared “custodian”, she played the General with sincere conviction. No doubt about it: her *Episode VIII* scenes – already wrapped – will be watched with love.

## CATASTROPHE TV 2015-2017

“Fucker hung up on me!” spits Fisher’s Mia in Sharon Horgan and Rob Delaney’s comedy. Joyously, Fisher embraced the role of Delaney’s crude, snarky, advice-dishing mother with tremendous relish: “I did really want to play an awful person. There are not a lot of choices for women past 27. I don’t wait by the phone.” Like she’d ever need to.



## BRIGHT LIGHTS TV 2017

Fisher’s idea to document her mother’s determination would have moved even without their deaths. Venturing into their shared home compound, home-movie archive and troubled emotions, Fisher Stevens and Alexis Bloom’s doc makes for raw viewing. But it’s never exploitative, instead offering a poignant portrait of mother and daughter as best friends getting by as best they can: together, fighting all the way.





**1932-2016**

# DEBBIE REYNOLDS

**W**e watched *Singin' In The Rain* every day for inspiration," said *La La Land*'s Ryan Gosling in tribute to golden-age star Debbie Reynolds, who died aged 84 on 28 December, one day after her daughter Carrie Fisher. The 1952 musical had rocketed the Texas-born Mary Frances Reynolds to stardom, after success in a beauty contest led her into the Warner Bros and then MGM studio system, giving her five credits and one perky chart hit ('Aba Daba Honeymoon', from *Two Weeks With Love*) previously.

Although Reynolds had no dance experience, she worked hard under Gene Kelly's precision guidance (with additional tips from a certain Fred Astaire). The result was a musical of immeasurable pep, which she followed with versatile, often comic roles alongside Frank Sinatra in *The Tender Trap*, Bette Davis in *The Catered Affair*, Glenn Ford in *It Started With A Kiss* and, in *Bundle Of Joy*, with singer Eddie Fisher, future husband and father of Carrie Fisher.

After Fisher left her for Elizabeth Taylor, Reynolds pursued less wholesome fare. An Oscar nomination followed for 1964's *The Unsinkable Molly Brown*, a role she won after Shirley MacLaine dropped out – coincidentally, MacLaine played a loose version of Reynolds in the adaptation of Carrie Fisher's semi-autobiographical *Postcards From The Edge*.

Attempts to diversify into thrillers (*What's The Matter With Helen?*) and TV (*The Debbie Reynolds Show*) didn't always work. But Reynolds kept busy with a Broadway musical (*Irene*), mental health charity work, a movie museum, voice work (*Kiki's Delivery Service*) and memoirs, before several acclaimed screen returns in – among others – Albert Brooks' *Mother*, her daughter's *These Old Broads*, *Behind The Candelabra* and TV's *Will & Grace*. More recently, tender TV documentary *Bright Lights* explored her tight bond with Carrie Fisher. Watch it and you'll have no trouble believing Reynolds' son Todd's heartbreaking remark following her death: "She wanted to be with Carrie." **KH**



## INSTANT EXPERT

# CZECH NEW WAVE

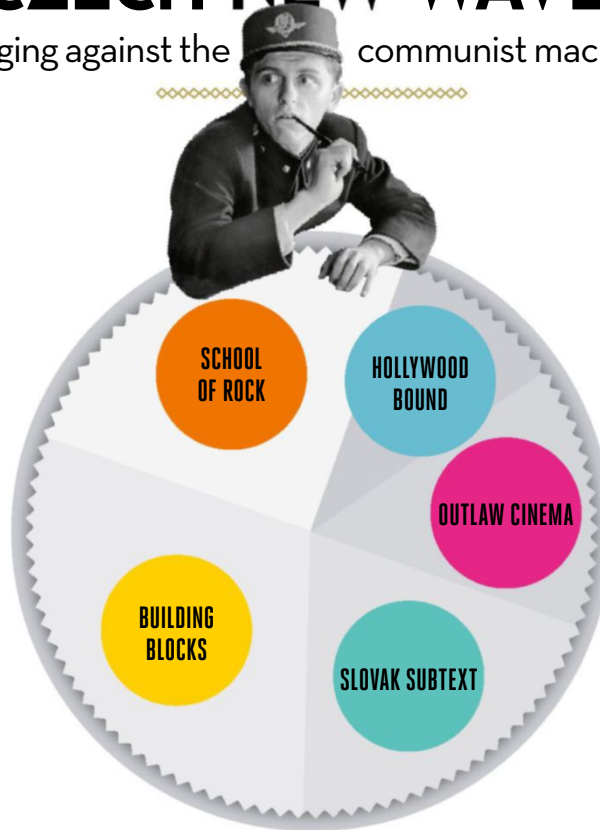
Raging against the communist machine...



**D**uring the 1960s, until half a million Warsaw Pact troops invaded the country to quash reforms in August 1968, Czechoslovakia sought to introduce liberal amendments to the communist regime. Students of the Film and TV School of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (FAMU) threw off social-realist strictures to unleash a volley of subversive films thrumming with absurdism, surrealism and midnight-black humour.



**L**ike the French New Wave, the Czech movement experimented with form and narrative, but was state funded (meaning higher production values) and frequently turned to literature for inspiration. The period proved startlingly fertile, ranging from Milos Forman's docu-infused dramedy *The Loves Of A Blonde* to Vera Chytilová's avant-garde explosion of madcap images, *Daisies*, to lyrical horror *Valerie And Her Week Of Wonders*.



**W**hile Czech-language films dominate, key Slovak entries include *Dragon's Return* (1968), about an exiled mountain potter confronted with suspicion and violence. Sensual tale of young love *Sun In The Net* (1962), meanwhile, helped kick-start the movement.



**T**he *Shop On Main Street* and *Closely Observed Trains* both won Best Foreign Language Film Oscars, while Milos Forman, whose *Loves Of A Blonde* was nominated, fled the country following '68's Operation Danube invasion and crackdown. His subsequent Hollywood career gave us two Best Picture winners in *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* (as subversive and anti-authoritarian as any Czech New Wave film) and *Amadeus*.



**T**hough celebrated internationally, most of the great films of the era were outlawed in their repressive homeland. The liberalising Prague Spring period provided hope, but only lasted from January 1968 until the invasion it inspired in August of the same year. Czechoslovakia remained under Soviet control until the Velvet Revolution in 1989, when a deluge of titles finally emerged to cement one of cinema's most radical New Waves. **JG**

## KEY MOVIES



### CLOSELY OBSERVED TRAINS

1966 ★★★★★

A young railway worker is desperate to lose his virginity in Jiří Menzel's bawdy-yet-tender WW2 dramedy. An exquisite portrait of everyday lives.



### THE FIREMEN'S BALL

1967 ★★★★★

The fire department throws a party only for the locals to steal raffle prizes and generally cause mischief in Milos Forman's attack on Soviet bureaucracy.



### MARKETA LAZAROVA

1967 ★★★★★

Christianity engulfs Paganism in this medieval epic. Voted the country's finest film, its fingerprints mark *The Revenant*'s landscapes of blood and snow.

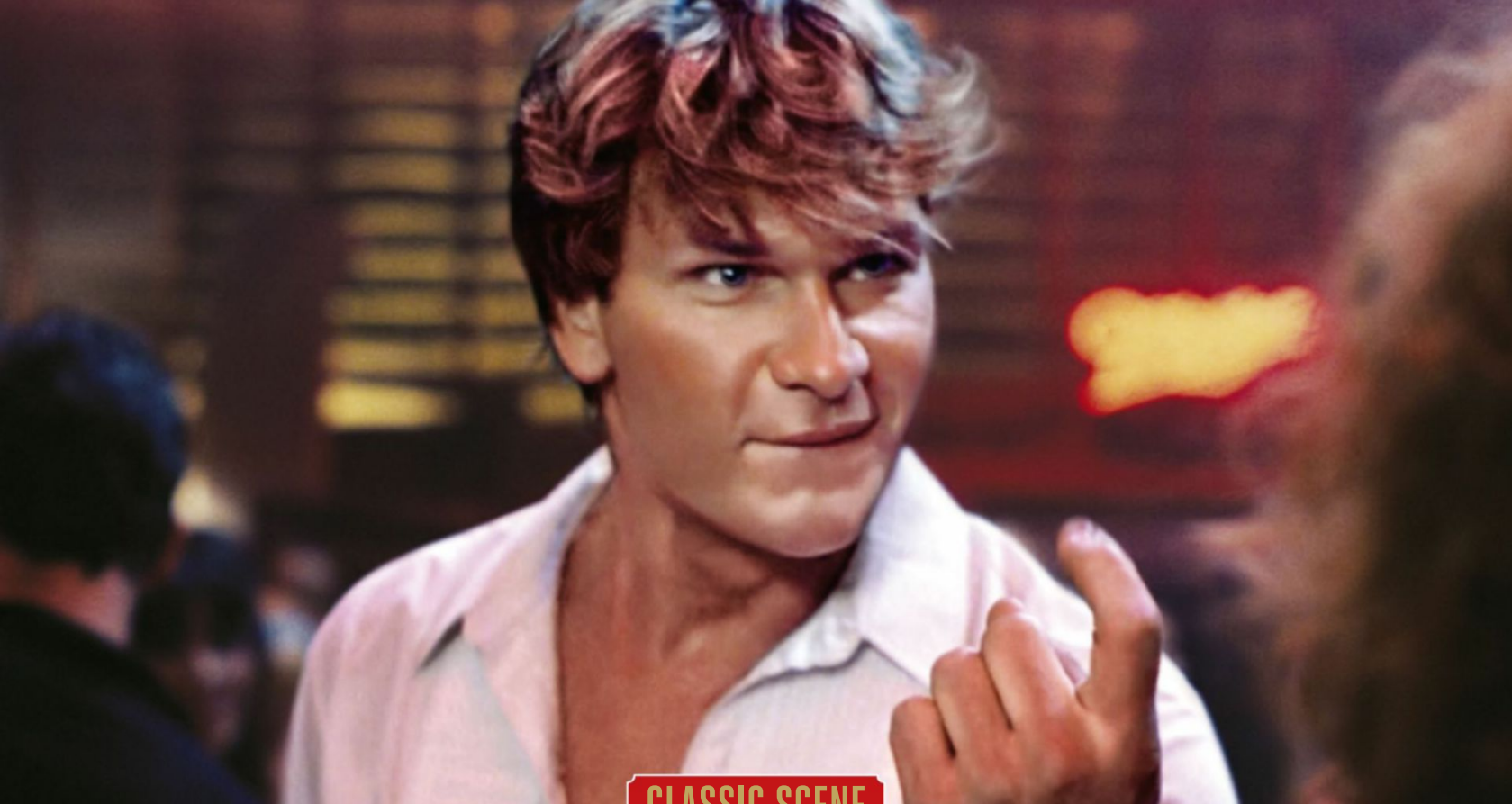


### THE EAR

1970 ★★★★★

A senior ministry figure and his drunken wife caustically argue the night away, all the while fearing their home is bugged. An uncommonly direct indictment of the communist regime.





## CLASSIC SCENE

# DIRTY DANCING

The time of their lives...

144



01

### HERE'S JOHNNY

It's the end-of-season show at Catskills resort Kellerman's, and 'Baby' Houseman (Jennifer Grey) is sitting with parents Jake (Jerry Orbach) and Marjorie (Kelly Bishop). Dance instructor Johnny Castle (Patrick Swayze) has other ideas though. "Nobody puts Baby in a corner!" he declares, before pulling her up on stage.



02

### STAGE INVASION

"Sorry about the disruption, folks," Johnny tells the audience. "But I always do the last dance of the season!" He then informs the stunned crowd that he's going to do "my kind of dancing with a great partner... somebody who's taught me about the kind of person I want to be".



03

### UNCHAINED MEDLEY

The routine that follows was originally performed to a demo of '(I've Had) The Time Of My Life' by Rachele Cappelli and songwriter Franke Previte. Only after shooting was it replaced by the Bill Medley and Jennifer Warnes version. The track went on to win the Oscar for Best Original Song.



04

### ONCE MORE WITH FEELING

Choreographer Kenny Ortega devised a fresh routine for Swayze and Grey to perform at the end of the film. But writer and co-producer Eleanor Bergstein felt it was more fitting that Johnny and Baby reprise the mambo they'd danced earlier in the pic, only this time minus any flubs or nervousness.



05

### UP WHERE SHE BELONGS

The big climax comes when Johnny lifts Baby aloft – a stunt Grey says she only did the once. "Never rehearsed it, never done it since," she reveals. "I don't know how people who re-enact it have the guts to throw themselves into the arms of anyone other than Patrick Swayze."



06

### LIFT KEEPS ON GIVING

Ryan Gosling and Emma Stone did a passable imitation of the celebrated lift in *Crazy Stupid Love*, while Bradley Cooper and Jennifer Lawrence also tried it in *Silver Linings Playbook*. When Miss Piggy tried to pull it off with Pepé the King Prawn in *The Muppets* though, the results weren't pretty... NS



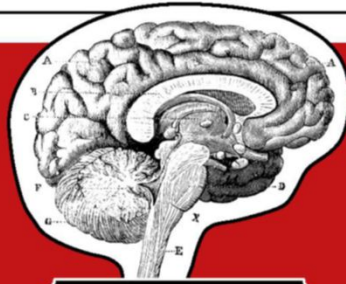


### EASY

1. Which well-loved trilogy was re-released in a series of Special Editions?
2. In which blockbuster would you find the Heart Of The Ocean?
3. Which *Jurassic Park* star did *not* return for sequel *The Lost World*? a) Jeff Goldblum b) Sam Neill c) Richard Attenborough
4. Elmore Leonard's novel *Rum Punch* was adapted as which Tarantino movie?
5. Which caper saw its heroines travelling in a Union flag-emblazoned bus driven by Meat Loaf?

### MEDIUM

1. The stars of *A Fish Called Wanda* reunited for which zoo-based comedy?
2. Which dim-witted BFFs together attended



## THE TF BRAIN

# 1997

*Bond! Boogie Nights! Brit-Buses! Test your knowledge of the year TF was born...*

their 10-year *High School Reunion*?

3. Who replaced Keanu Reeves to play the male lead in *Speed 2: Cruise Control*?
4. Who did American 'shock jock' Howard Stern play in comedy *Private Parts*?
5. If J is Will Smith and K is Tommy Lee Jones, then who is L?



### HARD

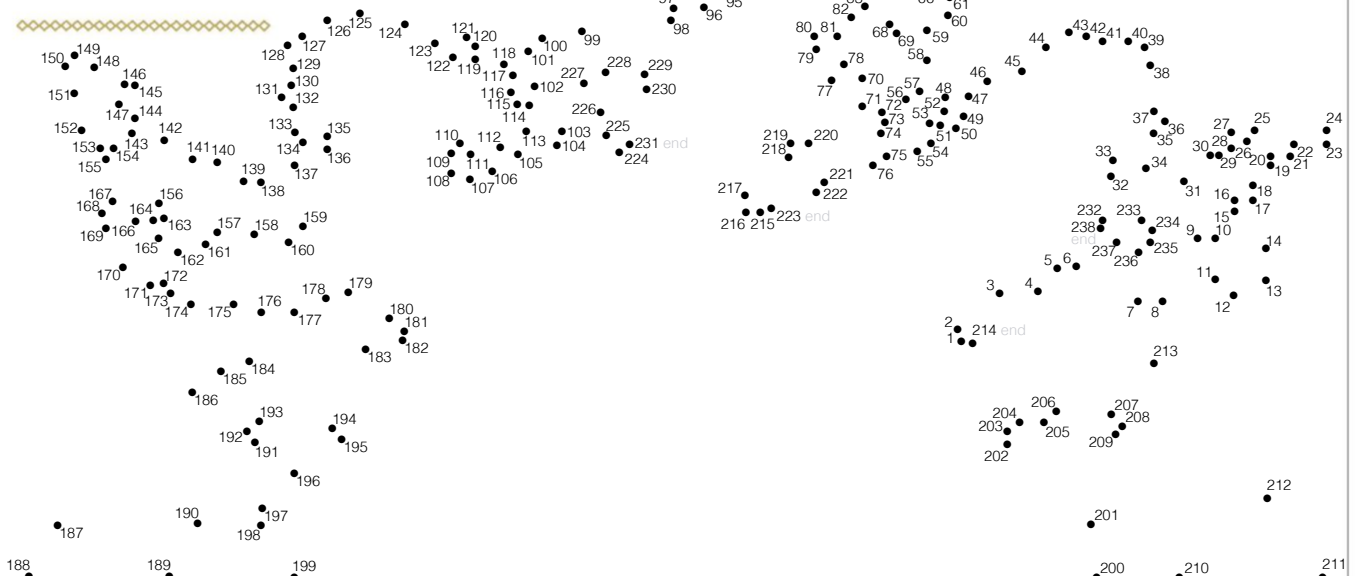
1. Which future Fellowship member made his big-screen debut in *Wilde*, as a rent boy?
2. And which *other* future Fellowship member made life hell for G.I. Jane?
3. The comedy *Gone Fishin'* reunited which co-stars from the *Lethal Weapon* series?
4. In Bond movie *Tomorrow Never Dies*, who or what is 'Tomorrow'?
5. What is porn prince Dirk Diggler's real name in *Boogie Nights*?

**ANSWERS:**  
EASY 1. The original Star Wars trilogy 2. *Titanic* 3. b) Sam Neill 4. Jackie Brown 5. *Spice World*  
MEDIUM 1. *The Muppet Movie* 2. *Private Parts* 3. Jason Patric 4. Himself 5. Linda Fiorentino  
HARD 1. Orlando Bloom 2. Viggo Mortensen 3. Danny Glover and Joe Pesci 4. A newspaper 5. Eddie Adams

## DOT-TO-DOT

# MOVIE MINDFULNESS

Join the dots for cinematic meditation.





# 60 Second Screenplay



**SPOILER ALERT!**

IF SAVES YOU A NIGHT OUT EVERY MONTH. THIS ISSUE: WE SUPER-LASER **ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY...**

## FADE IN:

**TITLE CARD:** A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away...

## AUDIENCE

Oi, who nicked John Williams' music? The opening crawl? The words "Star" and "Wars", FFS? Thieving Rebel bastards!

## EXT: PLANET LAH'MU

Imperial weasel **BEN MENDELSON** lands with his squad of deathtroopers, who are every bit as useless as regular stormtroopers, but taller.

## BEN MENDELSON

Captain Lanky – have your men locate all hedges and peer over them. Hey, **DADS MIKKELSEN**! Come back and finish my Death Star!

## DADS MIKKELSEN

I told ya, I gotta wait six weeks' delivery for them tiles, and Mick the plasterer's still busy wiv Mr. Vader's en suite. Any chance of a brew?

**BEN MENDELSON**'s Giraffes of Doom shoot the place up while **DADS** talks to **MINI FELICITY JONES**.

## DADS MIKKELSEN

Run, Felicity! Run like Ben told Luke to run! Like a wampa at a wedding buffet!

## MINI FELICITY JONES

Wow, we're really going for it with the callbacks...

## DADS MIKKELSEN

I love you Stardust. My little Dusty Star. When I say "Star", you say "Dust"! You'll defo remember the word "Stardust", won't you?

## EXT: ANOTHER PLANET

## EXT: ANOTHER PLANET 2.0

## EXT: ANOTHER PLANET. THE THIRD IN AS MANY MINUTES

## EXT: COULD BE ANOTHER PLANET, COULD BE A DIFFERENT BIT OF THE ONE TWO PLANETS AGO. WHO KNOWS?

**MINI FELICITY** becomes **BIG FELICITY**, assumes an alias (Ira Bell) and is brought before the Rebel chiefs for a debriefing so hush-hush it was redacted from the final cut.

## GENEVIEVE O'REILLY

So, like, imagine a disco ball that, instead of bringing twirling rainbow joy to the world, roasts you and everyone to extinction. And even worse? I'll still be wearing this robe in *Return Of The Jedi*! Ladies' tailors are few and far between in space, it seems...

## EXT: PLANET JEDHA

Following a trail of Easter eggs, **FELICITY**, **DIEGO LUNA** and droid K-2S-AGGRO locate monologuing iron lung **FOREST WHITAKER**.

## DIEGO LUNA

He has an alarming track record; I mean, *Species* was bad enough, but *Battlefield Earth*!?

## FOREST WHITAKER

Felicity – what will you do if they catch you? If they break you? Put a big bend in you? Chip your corners? What... will... you...

## FELICITY JONES

Could we hurry this along? Only the planet's about to die.

## EXT: PLANET DRIZZLE

## DADS MIKKELSEN

OK, finished my 'LUKE, SHOOT HERE!' sign. You can kill me off now.

## EXT: PLANET CLUB 18-30

## FELICITY JONES

OK, let's poach those plans! Now remember, this is a prequel, everyone look like you'd rather not be here.

Back-up arrives in the form of the **REBEL FLEET CIRCA 1977**, with its deadly arsenal of sideburns, bowl cuts and far-out grooviness.

## FISHY ADMIRAL

Commence attack plan 'restage all original-trilogy battles at once'! All craft, can you dig it?

Distracting the Empire by rejigging the ending and leaving out 80 per cent of the trailers, the Rebels steal the blueprints and are triumphantly left to incinerate in the sand.

## DONNIE YEN

I am with the Force and the Force is saying, "Screw this for a game of soldiers."

## FELICITY JONES

So ships that can travel zillions of miles at lightspeed can't beam us up? We're in the wrong space saga!

## DIEGO LUNA

And we're gonna miss the 'Vader loses his shit' scene! Like there was any other reason for this film to exist!

## FIN

**NEXT ISSUE: XXX: RETURN OF XANDER CAGE**

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THE RISE OF COBRA

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A vibrant comic book style poster for MCM Comic Con Birmingham 2017. The background is a bright orange and yellow gradient with stylized clouds and a rocket ship in the top left. A female superhero character with long brown hair and a yellow and orange suit is on the right. The main title 'MCM BIRMINGHAM COMIC CON' is in large, bold, stylized letters. Below it, the dates '18-19 MARCH 2017' and the location 'NEC-BIRMINGHAM' are displayed. At the bottom, two children in superhero costumes stand on either side of the text 'KIDS GO FREE'. The background also features a silhouette of a city skyline.

**MCM BIRMINGHAM**

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**18-19 MARCH 2017**

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