

FAN THE FIRE

#14
November 2008

formerly LOAD Magazine



RESIDENT EVIL 5

BLOOD, GORE, ZOMBIES AND MORE... WE DELVE INTO 2009'S MOST HOTLY ANTICIPATED GAME

CONCRETE AND GLASS

SHOREDITCH'S NEW MUSIC AND ARTS FESTIVAL HITS LONDON TO DEBUT SUCCESS

BENDER'S GAME

AS THE LATEST FUTURAMA STRAIGHT-TO-DVD MOVIE HITS STORES, WE EXPLORE THE HISTORY OF THE PLANET EXPRESS CREW



QUANTUM OF SOLACE

BOND IS BACK, WITH A VENGEANCE, AS DANIEL CRAIG COMPLETES HIS SECOND SPELL AS 007

GETTING WORD OUT

A BUNCH OF INDEPENDENT FILMMAKERS HEAD OUT TO AFRICA TO RECORD A FILM ABOUT LIVING AS A SUFFERER OF HIV/AIDS

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Aside from the extended inter-issue break, you might notice a few changes this month. For those of you who have been reading since issue 1, three years ago to this month, and all others who have heard about us along the way, the biggest difference will be instantly noticeable. The name LOAD has served us well but as we've ventured into film, music, art, TV and now style to boot, the brand we cultured for gaming alone has become outdated.

Welcome Fan the Fire. Different name, same magazine. Well, there are still a few other subtle differences. Taking some time out this over the last few months to refresh our batteries, we wound up in LA, hung out with our friends Delta Spirit, We Barbarians and The Shys, bumped into The OC and Dirty Sexy Money's Sammaire Armstrong and got talking with a few of the Heroes cast (sadly we've been sworn to secrecy on the new series), and of course, got that Hollywood face-lift. The design has been refreshed for Fan the Fire, so we hope you like the new look.

With our batteries recharged, we'll now be putting out a new issue every month from our new Fan the Fire site, although the old LOAD site will forward you to the new issues too. We've got a raft of great features, articles and exclusives lined up so stay tuned and check back often to ensure you don't miss a beat. And of course you can also subscribe to our iTunes podcast to get every new issue direct to your, erm, iTunes.

As for this issue, we say it every time, but it's our best yet. Make sure you don't miss our exclusive interview with Canadian indie band Tokyo Police Club, as we get the lowdown on what drives their success and the first news on their sophomore album. Photo-journalist Ryan

Roco recently returned from Africa to shoot non-profit organisation Getting Word Out's debut feature Wazi, exposing the problems of living with HIV/AIDS in a world so judgemental as our own. Of course we rule our eye over the latest film releases too.

After applying to be some shows ourselves, for journalistic purposes of course, we report on the comeback of all-action gameshows, as well as Futurama's triumphant return to the screen. And we challenge the new Quantum of Solace video game, as it tries to be the first film-to-game adaptation to actually hold its own.

The biggest treats of the issue arguably lie in the style and art sections. With an exclusive spread from Meg Wachter, we set some fashion precedents for that autumn look, forgoing the need to get out those woolly coats just yet. And last but not least, in maybe our finest art spread to date, we showcase the inspirational work of poster designers across America, proving screen-printing is far from dead as the digital age attempts to crush the paint palette for good.

You might think that would be enough for one issue but we've got an amazing competition to top it off. To celebrate our relaunch we're giving away prizes from throughout almost the entire issue, including some film goodies, DVDs, some of the stunning gig posters and more. Enjoy the issue.

Sam Bathe



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FAN THE FIRE MAGAZINE IS PUBLISHED MONTHLY.

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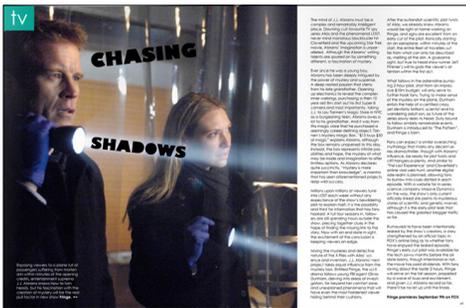


SPIRITED AWAY

It's great to see Delta Spirit breaking new boundaries and reaching new heights, and I was so excited to hear their album was being re-released on Rounder Records. Since hearing about the band when you interviewed them months and months ago I've been hooked. Can't wait to see which currently under-the-radar bands you've got lined up for the future issues.

Allen Crawford, via email

Don't worry, there are a fair few still up our sleeve.

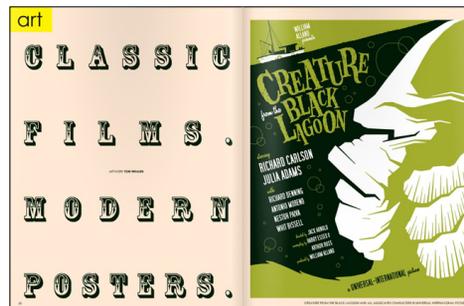


ON THE TRAIL OF THE PATTERN

I couldn't have agreed with your pre-air anticipation of Fringe, and the first few episodes have not disappointed. With Heroes rapidly losing it and no more LOST until the new year, Fringe is without a doubt the fall TV hit nobody should be missing out on. Abrams has scored

another top notch show.
Ben Leung, via email

Next up Star Trek. If he can pull that off, we've got the next entertainment master on our hands.



STUNNING CINEMA

Thank you so much for introducing me to the wonderful art and poster design of Tom Whalen. I have fallen in love some of his designs and rejoiced further when he opened an online store on his blog. Now I've just got to wait for them to arrive.

Chris Phillips, via email

The pleasure is ours, and he is indeed a wonderfully talented artist. Check his website at www.strongstuff.net for new designs and how to purchase a limited edition print for yourself.



GUNS, GIRLS AND GANGSTERS

Upon reading your preview of Guy

Richie's supposed return to form RockNRolla I too was excited about the Snatch and Lock, Stock... director turning his attention back to his gangster staple, that is until I saw the movie.

Sure, it's not as bad as Revolver, and certainly beats Swept Away but that's doesn't mean a thing when you consider how bad Richie's recent efforts have been. It's about time for Madonna's beau to stand aside as the cinema going public get ready for the next wave of British directors.

Tony Stevens, via email

Yeah, we didn't like it either...



WINTER WARMER

I eagerly await your next style spread with Jason Lee Parry. While the winter may be drawing in, flicking through his Fever shoot instantly fills me with warmth and makes me want to throw on a bikini and take a dip in the sea.

When I get outside I have to throw on another couple of layers but the inspiration is there. Hopefully his future work is just as good.

Sally Matheson, via email

Sadly, warmth or not, you ain't getting us to go for a swim off the British coast, it is a great spread though.

OUR OTHER SITES...





COUNTRYSIDE GETAWAY

If writer/director James Watkins is to be believed, England comes straight from the pages of the Daily Mail. As much an entertaining, gripping and intense horror movie, Watkins' *Eden Lake* offers his own take on the social structure of northern England.

Taking a break from the hectic life of the city, young couple Steve and Jenny head up to flooded quarry Eden Lake, to enjoy the countryside and a sleepy rural town before the developers roll in and turn the sur-

rounding forest into a gated commuter community.

But as the city slickers settle down for a night under the stars, the local kids comes out to play and the rest of Steve and Jenny's weekend break is far from relaxing. Equipped with an array of knives and a mobile phone to record their wicked actions, the gang of 'hoodies' (whom coincidentally none of which don a hooded jumped) terrorise the visiting couple after stealing their car and then torturing Steve.



The film is superbly made, with brutal violence and supreme tension where necessary, however, Watkins' message comes over a little too extreme.

Even down to the parents, anyone with an accent is portrayed in a very dim light. Kids are carefree and the adults equally immoral. Of course these people do exist, society is far from perfect, but rural communities are not the city loathing people Eden Lake would have you believe.

GROWING PAINS

Given the outstanding sales of its Wii and DS consoles, the former still selling out in parts of the World despite being first released almost two years ago, it's unsurprisingly Nintendo's financial results are simply remarkable. Employing only around 3,000, the majority in game development and R&D, with the video game companies profits bursting through the roof, Nintendo makes more per employee than Wall Street band Goldman Sachs.

And yet when the Wiis get home, after the Wii Sports-induced honeymoon period is over, seasoned gamers are now leaving their little white box to do little more than collect dust. The same was the case for Nintendo's last effort, the Gamecube. While both offer brilliant hardware capabilities, the real pull of Nintendo consoles has always been in the games, and their trademark innovation. In between Mario and Zelda titles, however, the quality often runs dry, with third party support never really matching home grown talent. When you've got a few friends over, Wii Sports will always be ready for an appearance, but for the more serious gamer, another console, a Microsoft 360, or, dare I say it, even a PS3 is a must. In a recent poll on gadget website Gizmodo.com, almost 70% of the 15,000 polled replied that their Wii obsession was just a fling, and it now sits unplayed.

Nintendo certainly made huge steps with the Wii, their bank balance proves it, but it is still far from the perfect package. So the gamer's dream of needing only one console for all their entertainment addictions will have to wait.



GRAND THEFT LUNCHBOX



Stealing someone's lunch is the perfect crime. See a tasty sandwich on the side and if you're a little bit tempted by your colleague's filling, give it a few minutes and any evidence of your snatch-and-grab will be digested. Designer Sherwood Forlee has the antidote. Creating his own lunch bag with blotches on either side, the enclosed sandwich looks positively mouldy.

Check out www.skforlee.com for more information.





Taking lessons from Camden Crawl, Concrete and Glass invaded London's trendy Shoreditch venues for a music and art festival to unite attendees both young and old. ➔➔



GOODBOOKS

Opening Concrete and Glass with tracks from their eagerly anticipated sophomore album, due spring 2009, the crowd at 93 Feet East took a while to get going but by the end of GoodBooks set there wasn't an inch to move. Playing signature tunes including 'The Illness', frontman Max Cooke was as charming as ever, wowing the crowd with his excellent performance and entertaining interludes.





OX.

EAGLE.

LION.

MAN.

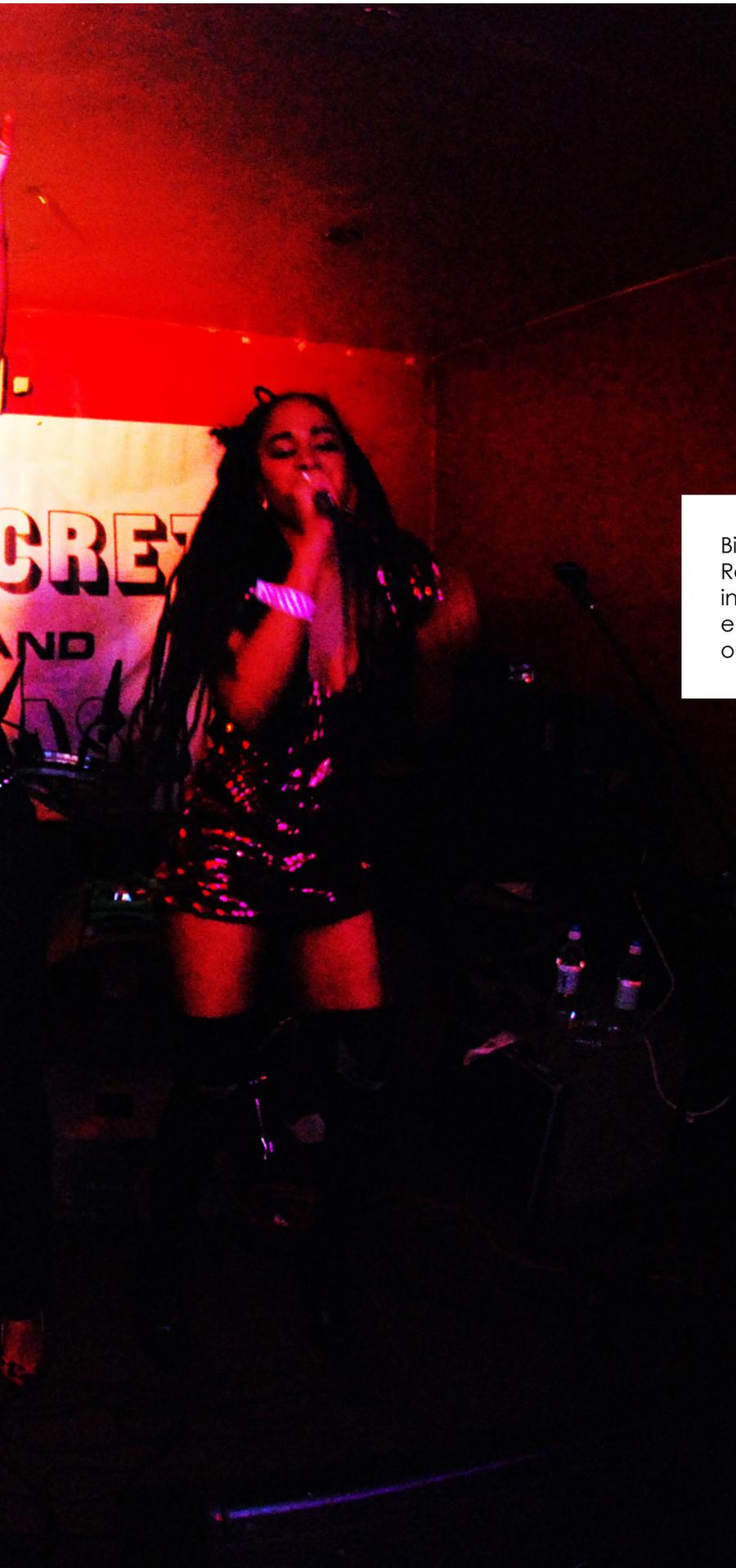
Known equally as much for his past relationship with Peaches Geldof, Fred 'Les' Blood-Royale's new band are starting to make a name for themselves in their own right. Blood-Royale's dead pan humour had fans in tears of laughter between songs while the tracks weren't half bad too. Indie rock done right, they just need to settle down and get an albums worth of songs done.



Signed to Wichita Recordings, a lot was expected of Sky Larkin's Concrete and Glass performance, but sadly the onlooking crowd were left wanting a little more. Playing tracks from their recently recorded debut album, their music lacked the enticing riffs any band needs to break through in this overflowing scene.

SKY LARKIN





THE REAL HEAT

Billed as a raunchy version of the Sugababes, The Real Heat certainly lived up to expectations. Playing only a handful of tracks, the lyrics of one made entirely of profanities, and as a result the musical output was little more than a gimmick.



DEAD KIDS

Known for their particularly riotous gigs, Dead Kids didn't disappoint. With the rest of the band seemingly told stay low key, lead singer Mike Frantel ventured into the crowd more than he stayed on stage, repeatedly slurring as he told them to get into the music before getting a little too close to a couple of the female onlookers. Their antics will certainly turn heads but there's some musical substance to back it up. Here's hoping their debut album is filled with as much energy.







WILDBIRDS

&

PEACE- DRUMS

Playing to a backdrop of stunning lighting at Cafe 1001, Wildbirds & Peace-drums sound like a mix between Goldfrapp and Noah and The Whale. The pair's stunning performance won over the crowd eagerly awaiting the night's headliner, and could have been the pick of the night themselves.

LYKKE LI

Bursting onto the scene barely months ago, Lykke Li's rise to fame and popularity is nothing short of remarkable and the Swedish songstress was on top form. Throwing in a Vampire Weekend track to get things moving before working her way through debut album 'Youth Novels', the crowd were singing along in no time. The perfect conclusion to a great night in Shoreditch.







THE PROBLEM KIDS PRESENT

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YOU YEAH?

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CHLOE 'PROBLEM KID' LITTLE
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£5 ENTRY | 10.30PM DOORS | 18+
CAMDEN BARFLY, LONDON

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LET'S WRESTLE

Giving the surprise performance of Concrete and Glass, Let's Wrestle wowed a packed Macbeth crowd with music that aches of The Young Knives. Bassist Mike Lightning seemed strangely unmoved by what could prove to be a hugely important set in the band's development but did provide a wonderful bassline to every song which could take Let's Wrestle far. A little work is needed on lyrics, but these boys have all the right ingredients to hit the big time.

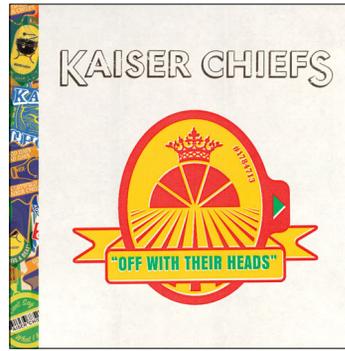




Cold War Kids
'Loyalty to Loyalty'
 (Vertigo)

Foregoing the anthemic choruses of debut record 'Robbers and Cowards', Cali indie rockers Cold War Kids have produced a supremely mature and cultured second album in 'Loyalty to Loyalty' that feels slightly more relaxed and effortlessly timeless.

★★★★★



Kaiser Chiefs
'Off With Their Heads'
 (B-Unique)

After just about getting away with 'Yours Truly, Angry Mob', The Kaiser Chiefs new album is one step too far into mediocrity. Producer Mark Ronson has at last put a foot wrong as 'Off With Their Heads' stumbles to a close in barely 40 minutes.

★★★★★



Keane
'Perfect Symmetry'
 (Island)

After the Mystery Jets' hugely successful venture into '80s electro, Keane are the next band to relive their inspirations. Gone are piano notes, in with synth and keyboard effects. 'Perfect Symmetry' is a fulfilling third record that takes the band into new, more at home, scenes.

★★★★★



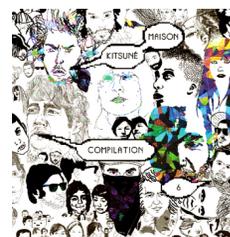
Bloc Party
'Intimacy'
 (Wichita)

Bloc Party refocus towards spikey, harsh electronica, a far stretch from brilliant breakthrough debut 'Silent Alarm'. Seasoned fans who were disappointed by their sophomore effort will take a while to warm to 'Intimacy', but once you do, it'll grow on you surprisingly fast.

★★★★★



Various Artists
'Kitsuné Maison Vol. 6'
 (Kitsuné)



Famous for their trendsetting compilations, Kitsuné return with volume 6 in their Maison series. Showcasing the musical talents of a slew of bands before they hit real fame.

As you might guess with the inclusion of such artists, Kitsuné's Maison CDs take an electronic feel, though with number 6 tagged as 'The Melodic One', the latest is more than ever a mix of slower, relaxed tracks as well as the hands-in-the-air fast paced stormers.



For those not stepping far beyond mainstream indie-electro, most of the featured artists will be a fresh face, for others, the likes of autoKratz, Digitalism and Fischerspooner will be, well known, if still relatively new, names. The real gems of *Maison Vol. 6*, however, come by the way of the artists for whom, this is one of their very first proper releases. 'Hear It In The Cans' is a glorious, jolting electro track by We Have Band, and their first material for popular consumption, with similar said for The Shoes' 'Let's Go' and A-Trak's 'Say Woah'.

Once again Kitsuné have pulled off another trailblazing selection of

electronic tracks from the bands of tomorrow, packaged and mixed in a way all can consume. The compilation might lack the one of two major names present of previous editions, but by no way does that hold it back, it just means it might take you a little longer to find your comfort zone.

Despite a few oddballs along the way, *Kitsuné Maison Vol. 6* is a must have for anyone chasing after their next indie obsession, and equally perfect to throw on before, during, or after a party. The boys from France have done it again.

★★★★★

Division of Laura Lee
Water Rats, London
14/10/08

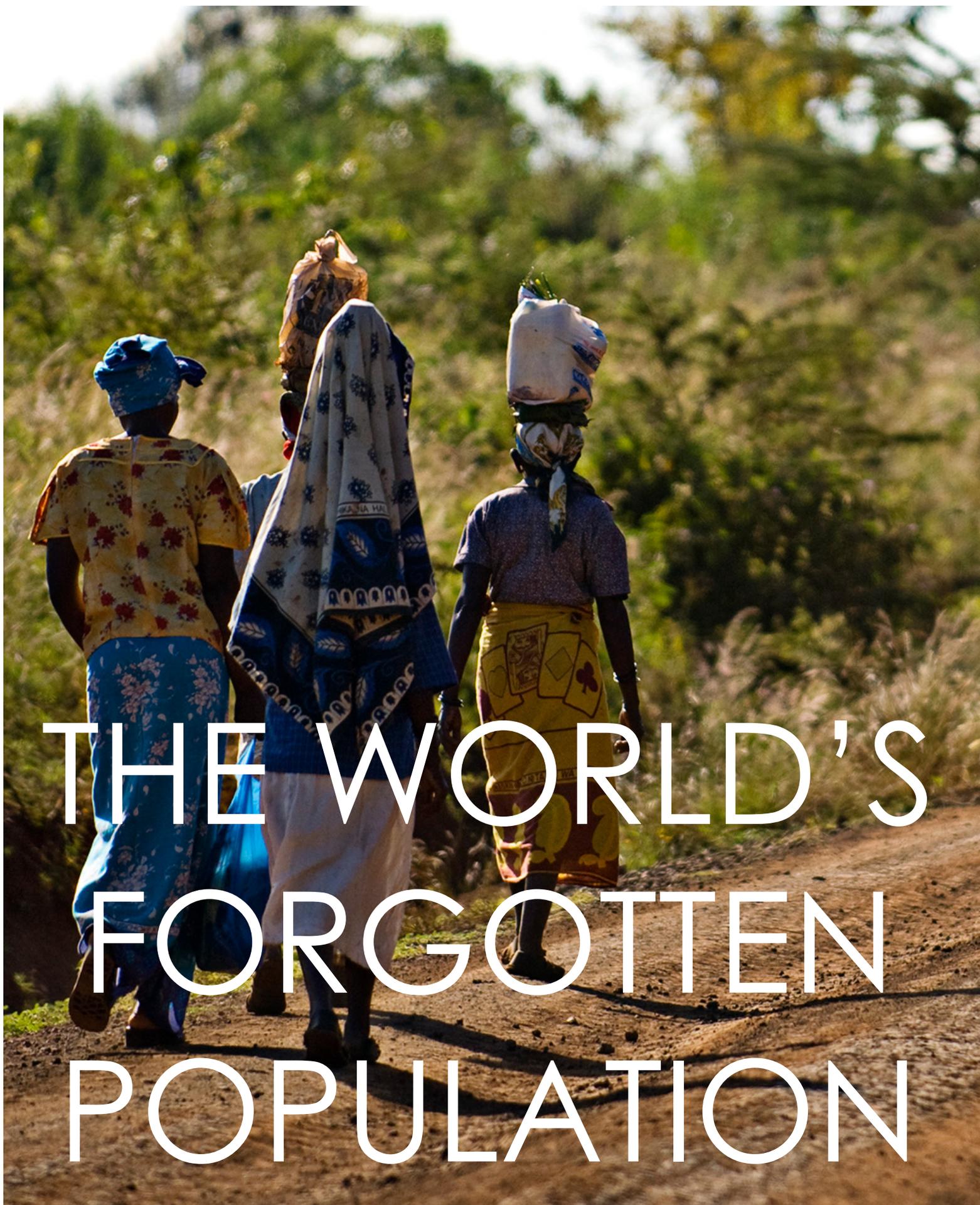
Playing a rare UK show ahead of their upcoming fifth album, 'Violence Is Timeless', Division of Laura Lee raced through tracks from their back catalogue including 'Does Compute' and 'We Are Numbers', so adept in front of the London it was as if they were here every week.

With a packed crowd jumping along to every riff, they treated onlookers to a sneak preview of new material which went down equally as well before the set finally came to a close. Don't be surprised if Division of Laura Lee are the next Swedish band to make big steps worldwide over the coming months.

Delta Spirit
The Detroit Bar,
Costa Mesa
19/09/08

Heading out on tour with Dr. Dog across America, it is support act Delta Spirit that are regularly stealing the show. Returning back to Costa Mesa for a show near hometown San Diego, lead singer Matt Vasquez et al put in a triumphant performance.

With debut album 'Ode To Sunshine' racing off the shelves, their increasing fan base sang back every word of single 'Trachcan' before closing with 'Children' and 'Bleeding Bells', hammering down on a massive drum to huge applause as their time on stage came to an end. Get ready for a headline tour later this year.



THE WORLD'S FORGOTTEN POPULATION



Shocked by how sufferers of HIV/AIDS are treated across the world, a group of young filmmakers flew out to Africa to chart everyday life in a hillside town in the hope of exposing what is a truly global problem. ➤➤

After almost two days straight travelling across the world, a small group of talented young filmmakers stepped off a bus half way up mount Kilimanjoro, Tanzania, with a couple of video cameras in hand, and a moral mission to achieve.

Before touching down for two months in the Rombo district, Joshua Ballinger, Ryan Roco, Keri Oberly, Breezy and Megan Erickson had been running a non-profit organisation called Getting Word Out. Targeting their efforts to raise awareness about areas of social injustice and global concern, the team turned their attention to HIV/AIDS in Africa in an attempt expose what is it like to live as a sufferer. Taking their project 6,000 feet up Mount Kilimanjoro into the rural jungle villages that span the steep hillside, they set to work on a documentary entitled Wazi.

As co-director/director of photography Ryan Roco explains, "we believe people living with HIV/AIDS are stigmatised all over the world and want to show through our film the strengths and struggles of those that live their lives despite the daily discrimination they face."

Focussing their film on a handful of individuals, the idea for Wazi was born during a previous trip to the area. Serving in the Peace Corps for three years, and stationed in Tanzania, Megan Erickson had experienced the pain of a sufferer first hand when Keri Oberly visited to help out. Overcome by the powerful story of one woman in particular, Mama Oska, who since became the main character in the film, upon Keri's return, she and the rest of the team knew their next project lay in waiting.

Being a fluent speaker of Swahili as well as the local tribal language Chagga, Megan sorted most of the local logistics, and in unison with Keri, organised travel details and subjects for the film. The filmmakers organised a place to stay for the

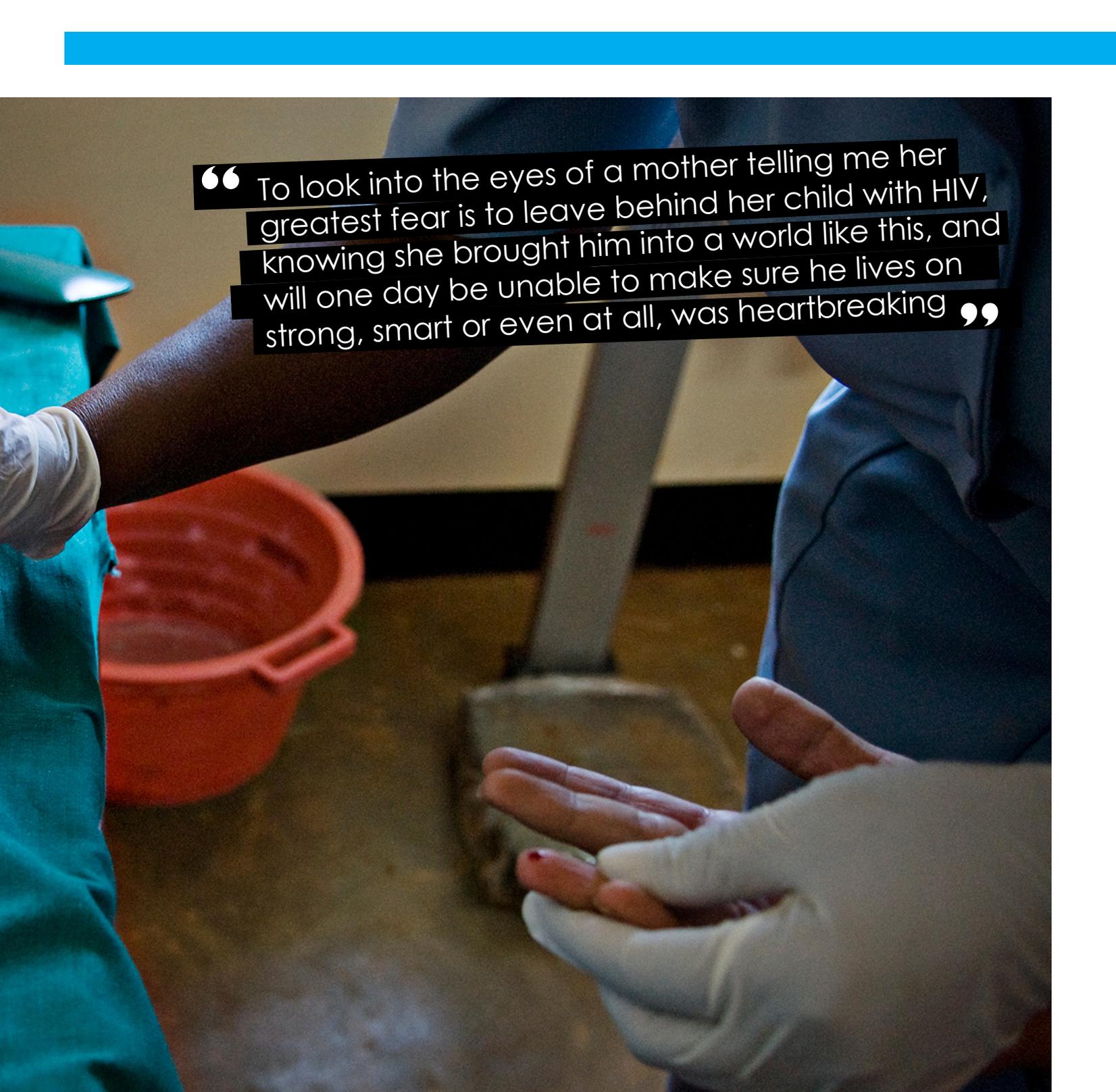


two months, renting the side house of a German doctor close to Mama Oska's town.

With the need to spend almost all time filming with the suffering families, beyond the obvious language barriers, the toughest part of the trip for Ryan lay in becoming emotionally attached to their subjects. "To focus on the film is to spend as much time with the families as possible and spending that much time

simply, for us, results in us caring about their well being despite all journalistic reasons telling us to be detached", he reveals, but with no guarantee the filmmakers will be able to make a difference to the lives of their subjects, Wazi brought with it their own emotional turmoil.

Ryan continues, "to look into the eyes of a mother telling me her greatest fear is to leave behind her child with HIV, knowing she brought



“ To look into the eyes of a mother telling me her greatest fear is to leave behind her child with HIV, knowing she brought him into a world like this, and will one day be unable to make sure he lives on strong, smart or even at all, was heartbreaking ”

him into a world like this, and will one day be unable to make sure he lives on strong, smart or even at all, was heartbreaking.”

Investing not only their own time and money but love, care and attention comes over strongly in the film to produce a wholly honest and heartfelt documentary. Wazi succeeds in the group's goal to raise awareness of a big social problem, and while

proving hugely effective, in terms of the lasting objectives, its success will be deemed by the number of eyes Getting Word Out can get the film in front of.

Hoping to market the film towards whatever will bring the largest viewing audience, changing how people look at those suffering from HIV, the team are currently planning on touring film festivals across America and then overseas to raise

awareness of their project and secure that all important distribution deal.

Given the quality of the film, and the issues Wazi raises, It is only a matter of time before interest starts rolling in and Wazi starts to make the difference Mama Oska et al deserve.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT WWW.WAZIFILM.COM.

THE TALES OF DESPEREAUX

Sam Fell returns for with his second feature length computer animated film of the year, *The Tale of Desperaux*, based on the 2003 book by children's author Kate DiCamillo. The story is one of rodent heroism and seemingly impossible love; the titular character is a mouse who falls head over heels for a human princess, voiced by Harry Potter's Emma Watson.

In keeping with the intent of its original author, the film is very much a production aimed primarily at the younger viewers, with a high cuteness factor and delightful animation. But there ought to be something there for the adults too; the visual style is alluring and the family-friendly jokes that so often pepper these productions, should keep everyone satisfied. All in all, it looks a promising film with a strong cast and a Newbery Medal winning tale at its heart, hoping to be the triumph of the Christmas period, during which time sales of stuffed mice will surely go through the roof. Whether this can match the class and consistency of the most recent Pixar efforts remains to be seen, an unfortunate ramification of Pixar's success is that every other company using the animated film style is now inevitably observed in their shadow, but the early signs show enough promise here to draw families of all ages into the cinemas come Christmas time.

THE TALES OF DESPEREAUX WILL BE RELEASED ON DECEMBER 19TH.









FRIDAY THE 13TH

While film lovers the world over will grimace at the thought of another piece of cinematic history being remade in Hollywood, after the remake of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* made well over 10 times its budget at theatres alone, film companies will keep rolling them out.

The *Friday the 13th* franchise is the next to be dealt the remake treatment, almost 30 years since the original was released. Produced by Michael Bay, written by the team behind the latest in the series, *Freddy vs. Jason*, and directed by the man behind the aforementioned 2003 version of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Friday the 13th's* modern update at least looks to have some tried and tested names behind it.

Exploring the iconic hockey mask of focal character Jason Voorhees, the 2009 slasher will be set largely in a cabin on franchise centre point Crystal Lake. The claustrophobic trailer aired at this year's Comic Con was very well received so you never know, this might actually be one of the first classic remakes to get it right.

FRIDAY THE 13TH WILL BE RELEASED ON FEBRUARY 13TH 2009.

THE SPIRIT

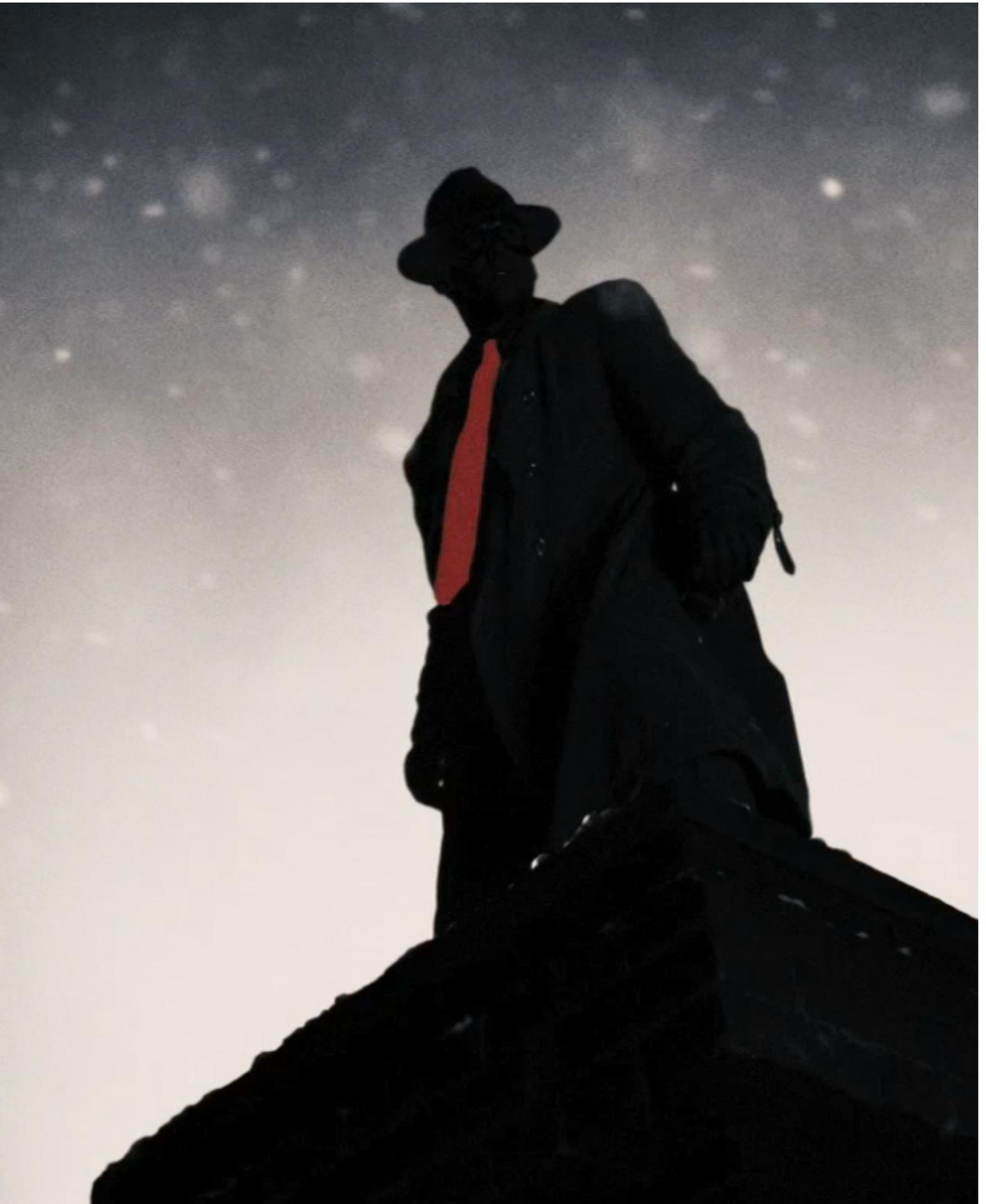
Based on Will Eisner's classic comic book character, first published in the 1940s, Frank Miller's transformation from graphic novel superstar to Hollywood film director is complete as he writes and directs *The Spirit*.

Once a cop before he was seemingly killed, the film's focal character *The Spirit* is a crime fighting crusader, always bearing his signature red tie, pleasingly picking up well into the action, and not going down the all too predictable origin story route normally adopted.

Lovers of the original series, however, have become a little concerned about Miller's silver screen interpretation. Using the same technology to create the near two tone, black and white style seen in *Sin City*, fans will be worried *The Spirit* will lose the depth of colour and visual excitement of the comic, feeling cold like Miller's last film. In equal measure, the creation of Samuel L. Jackson's character, and enemy, the Octopus, is a risk that could put off seasoned readers. Only time will tell if the gamble pays dividends.

THE SPIRIT WILL BE RELEASED ON DECEMBER 25TH IN AMERICA AND JANUARY 1ST 2009 IN THE UK.





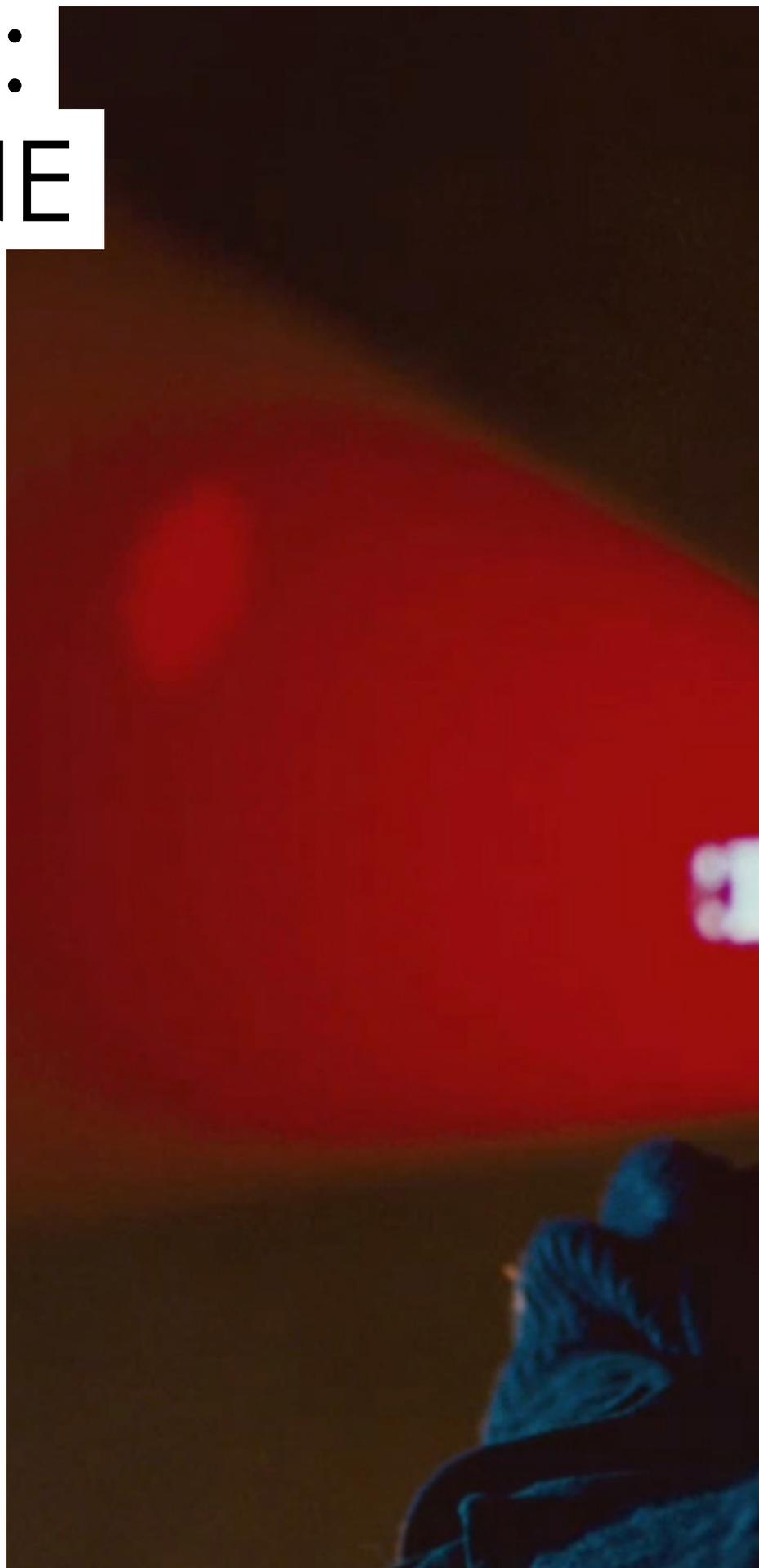
PUNISHER: WAR ZONE

Being one of a select few who consider Jonathan Hensleigh's *The Punisher* to be marginally better than the majority of critical assessments indicated, this reviewer is placed in a slightly odd position as regards the upcoming 'reboot'. Something of a buzzword in the film industry at present, Marvel have already proved with the latest *Hulk* release, which was expensive and average, that it is a difficult and costly process. Then again, DC has proved that it can be spectacular, as exemplified by the current *Batman* revival.

When it was announced that a new *Punisher* film was in the pipeline, a lot of people naturally presumed that Marvel would restore the original cast (who, for the most part, did a decent job) under the same director and have a second go at it. Not so. This reboot has rather mercilessly cut all ties with Hensleigh's film, choosing instead to forget, as with Ang Lee's *Hulk*, de-canonising everything that took place therein.

So, we begin again. Ray Stevenson is the *Punisher* and Dominic West is his adversary, *Jigsaw*. Casting one's mind back to the 2004 film, one remembers a slightly tongue-in-cheek but generally quite dark affair, by far the most sombre of the current trend of Marvel films, and so it was a little surprising, then, that Marvel wanted this film to go much further. But then, the comics were no slouch when it came to spreading claret, so this cannot really be considered anything other than sticking closely to the source material. An R-rated trailer was released some time ago and was splattered with all kinds of brutal violence, much more explicit than anything seen in the 2004 attempt; multiple head explosions and a chair leg in the eye were just some of the delights on display. Whether this new focus on violence is a good thing or not we'll just have to wait and see. If you're heading out to see this one in early December, you might want to leave the kids at home, it really does look like a war zone.

PUNISHER: WAR ZONE WILL BE RELEASED ON DECEMBER 5TH.







ROLE MODELS



As a fellow American Pie-alumni stuttering actor, Seann William Scott must be hoping *Role Models* will be the film to at last cement his presence in the film industry, and not as a wholly annoying, immature college boy. Alongside the always watchable Paul Rudd, *Role Models* sees the pair sentenced to community service after irresponsible behaviour as energy drink public representatives.

Placed in the *Sturdy Wings* children's centre, Scott and Rudd become role models for two troubled kids, Augie, played by Christopher Mintz-Plasse of *Superbad* fame, a dungeons and dragons obsessed teen warrior and Bobb'e J. Thompson as Ronnie, an eternally difficult, if playful, young rebel.

Co-written by Paul Rudd, Ken Marino and director David Wain, while the plot might not sound too inspiring, with the talent on show, and plenty of opportunities for funny scenes, expect *Role Models* to be substantially superior to the team's last release, *The Ten*, which flopped.

ROLE MODELS WILL BE RELEASED NATIONWIDE ACROSS AMERICA ON NOVEMBER 7TH AND JANUARY 23RD IN THE UK.

BURN AFTER READING

Directed by: Joel & Ethan Coen Starring: George Clooney, Frances McDormand, John Malkovich, Tilda Swinton & Brad Pitt
 Studio: Working Title Films Distributor: Universal Pictures
 Release: Out now (USA) October 17 (UK)

The Coen brothers have long been recognised in the film community as two of the most talented filmmakers around today, but it took this year's three Oscars and the wonderful *No Country For Old Men* for their reputation to truly hit the mainstream. Their return to action, however, couldn't be much further from the broody thriller, as *Burn After Reading* sees the Coen brothers return to black comedies.

Taking its name from the notice on secret documents, the Coens' latest release is based around CIA agent Osbourne Cox (Malkovich), recently relieved of his top level duties, adamant he will now spend his time writing a memoir of his time in the security service to the disapproval of his wife. But he soon finds a glass of scotch in his hand more than a pen which proves to be the final straw.

His wife Katie (Swinton) has had enough, and not contented with Osbourne living off her earnings as he mopes around the house, starts preparing a case for their divorce, copying personal and financial files onto a CD.

Although when the CD goes missing, the real troubles start.

Popping up at a local gym, trainers Chad (Pitt) and Linda (McDormand) end up in possession of what they believe to be secret government files, and being the good Samaritans they are, offer to return the disc to Osbourne, for a fee of course. As a scramble ensues, Treasury worker Harry (Clooney) works his way into the

situation, before the multiple stories converge for a truly mouth-watering finish.

Being a Coen brothers film, supreme attention to detail and quality of production are expected, but the drawn out set-up and middle act are not. Failing to grasp as many laughs or moments of excitement as *Fargo*, another of their films with a similar tone, is a problem *Burn After Reading* struggles to shake off until the very last scene. Dialogue is snappy but the story struggles to develop sufficiently to keep the audience on their toes, and as such pays a heavy price.

The entire cast, however, prove a strong redeeming factor, whom without giving such great performances, could have condemned the Coen brothers to a real blot on their filmography. From the foul-mouthed and spritely Malkovich to the ice cold Swinton and comedic saviour Brad Pitt, every bit the fun-loving, idiotic black-mailer.

With the brilliant ending in mind, and the funniest moments of the whole film with the very last few words, add great performances from the whole cast and it's a wonder *Burn After Reading* isn't another Coen classic, but the muddled story fails to focus your attention for long enough to care about any of the characters. *Burn After Reading* is certainly not without merit, but it suffers from even greater flaws.

★★★★★



REVIEWS





BLINDNESS

Directed by: Fernando Meirelles Starring: Julianne Moore, Mark Ruffalo, Danny Glover, Gael Garcia Bernal & Alice Braga
 Studio: Bee Vine Pictures Distributor: Pathé Release: Out now (USA) November 28 (UK)

After years old holding out for the right team to adapt his award winning book, José Saramago at last granted screenwriter Don McKellar and producer Niv Fichman the rights to a film adaptation, and given the cast and crew that were soon attached, his decision seemed perfectly made. Fresh from the critically acclaimed *The Constant Gardener* and his breakthrough Academy Award nominated film *City of God*, director Fernando Meirelles took the helm, ready to infuse his all-encompassing, break-neck style onto a remarkable story. With a huge sense of anticipation building within the film community, the multi-talented cast was easy to attract, and at last, *Blindness* went into production.

Telling the story of an epidemic that ravages society as we know it, *Blindness*, as you might have guessed, inflicts loss of sight to those unlucky enough in the world. Starting when an unassuming driver all of a sudden goes blind at the traffic lights (Iseya), soon enough, the good Samaritan who drives him home (McKellar) and all he comes into contact with suffer the same affliction

as the outbreak spreads.

Called 'the white sickness', the Government send sufferers to makeshift camps in an attempt to contain the medical abnormality. Separated into wards, the blind start to form their own mini-communities, with the first sufferers all paired together to discover they have crossed paths before as the disease was passed on. Only ward one harbours a secret.

Taking the mantle of ward leaders and spokespeople, a doctor (Ruffalo) and his wife (Moore) help new inhabitants settle into the camp, with others holding little idea their female leader can, in fact, see.

Shouldering the burden of the entire community, looking out for them, protecting them, and as life becomes ever more unpredictable when ward three start to make the rules, the doctor's wife at last feels enough is enough, and with society outside equally as broken, leads her new makeshift family back into civilisation.

Inspired by the brilliant Julianne

Moore, not a single member of the cast put a foot wrong as they adapt to life without sight. The unforgiving Gael Garcia Bernal, who starts a revolution inside the camp also stands out, and yet, despite slick, and stylish directing from Meirelles, *Blindness* feels strangely unsatisfying.

With an indie and quirky atmosphere to the film, much akin to one of Bernal's previous film *Science of Sleep*, the drama lacks an end-of-the-world, claustrophobic feel that would have made it all the more intense, exciting and entertaining. Saramago was intent, when at last handing over the rights to his literary masterpiece, that *Blindness* did not become a zombie-style film, but you can't help but wonder if the screenplay had been written more in the essence of *Children of Men*, which, furthermore, would have better suited the director.

Blindness is certainly far from a bad film, but it lacks the pace and energy the story desires, coupled with a sympathetic ending, and you'll leave the cinema wanting more.

★★★★★

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THE HOUSE BUNNY

Directed by: Fred Wolf Starring: Anna Faris, Colin Hanks, Emma Stone, Kat Dennings, Katerine McPhee & Beverly D'Angelo
Studio: Happy Madison Productions Distributor: Columbia Pictures Release: Out now

For some, 'From the writers of *Legally Blonde*' is the perfect first introduction. Guaranteed girly laughs, that fairytale ending and a lot of pink. For others, it would be another nightmare. And the story of *The House Bunny* didn't sound much better.

Starring Anna Faris as an aging Playboy Bunny, thrown out of the Mansion at the monumental age of 27, her character Shelley Darlington is homeless with nothing but her rusty car and 6-inch heels to keep her company. Driving through town, she stumbles across a street of university houses and sets her heart on taking

residence. Knocked back from the first few elite sororities without a wisp of a chance, the dolled up Shelley is taken in by Zeta to become the house mother.

However, Zeta are more in need of Shelley than she is of the roof over her head. Outcasts at their university the sorority sisters are at risk of losing their house unless they can improve their social standing and gain new pledges for the next year. Shelley takes it on herself to reinvent the girls, with the help of a lot of make up, a lot of shopping and a fair few parties, and save Zeta from losing its sorority status.

While the plot does very little beyond the ordinary, in fact moves the other way in terms of morality and playing to stereotypes, *The House Bunny* is remarkably funny. The script is very dry with really effective dead pan humour, Emma Stone playing Zeta sister Natalie standing out in particular, while Anna Faris' performance cannot go unnoticed.

The House Bunny might require you to burn off your brain for 98 minutes, but if you go with it, you'll come out having had a barrel of laughs. Men included.

★★★★★



THE FIST FOOT WAY

Directed by: Jody Hill Starring: Danny McBride, Mary Bostic, Ben Best, Ken Aquilar, Tyler Baum & Sean Baxter
 Studio: Gary Sanchez Productions Distributor: Momentum Pictures
 Release: Out now

After Pineapple Express and Tropic Thunder, Danny McBride completes his summer assault on cinema with *The Fist Foot Way*, the most subtle comedy of the lot.

Shot for a mere \$70,000, over just 19 days back in 2006, the film first came to mainstream attention in the States after McBride appeared on Conan O'Brien's late night TV show in character. With Danny playing martial arts instructor Fred Simmons, his interview alongside fan of the film Will Ferrell concluded with an intentionally unsuccessful tae kwon do demonstration, an apt portrayal of his on-screen character.

Obsessed with martial arts movie star Chuck Wallace, Fred Simmons runs his own school, hopeful of attracting his idol into town for an exclusive performance, however, like his own martial arts demonstrations, everything does not go according to plan.

When Fred finds out his wife is having an affair he turns his frustration and anger onto his class, and despite a slightly depressing middle act, the steady laughs win out and *The Fist Foot Way* draws to a warming conclusion.

Those needing a Hollywood sheen to their comedies won't find a lot to keep them happy, *The Fist Foot Way* instead offers more intelligently written, slight jokes that keep the film ticking along in the more taxing periods. Not perfect by any means, but upon widespread release, will find more fans than the average two-bit comedy.



IGOR

Directed by: Anthony Leondis Starring: John Cusack, Myleene Klass, John Cleese, Steve Buscemi, Eddie Izzard & Robin Howard
 Studio: Exodus Productions Distributor: Momentum Pictures
 Release: Out now (USA) October 17 (UK)

If you are born as a hunchback in the small town of Malaria, you have one career path; an Igor. With the rest of the world cowering, every year Malaria's evil scientists create their most terrifying inventions, with an Igor on hand to assist. After completing Igor school, Igors are equipped with the skills to be any evil scientist's right hand man, although one Igor harbours the hope of doing a little more than just pulling the starter switch.

When one of Dr. Glickenstein's failed experiments hangs his lab coat up for good, his Igor (Cusack) gets the chance to enter the town's science fair in his place, with the most remarkable creation Malaria has ever known.

Despite being designed with echoes of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, Igor sadly lacks Tim Burton's artistic and directorial flair. The animation is a little sloppy and underdeveloped while the same can be said for the story. While some of the jokes come off, kids especially will struggle to really get into the film as Igor lacks the pace and excitement of similar animated efforts.

Igor is certainly watchable, and there's nothing to offend at least, but in equal measure there's very little to make the film stand out despite a charming conclusion to the tale. A stellar vocal cast try to help give the film a little sparkle but in the end you'll just be left wondering how big the pay packets must be for film stars to continue giving their name to second rate scripts.



QUANTUM OF SOLACE

Directed by: Marc Forster Starring: Daniel Craig, Mathieu Amalric, Olga Kurylenko, Gemma Arterton, Judy Dench, Jeffrey Wright & Giancarlo Giannini
 Studio: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) Distributor: Sony Pictures
 Release: October 31 (UK) November 14 (USA)

Starting just hours after the conclusion of *Casino Royale*, James Bond's latest on-screen adventure is arguably even more highly anticipated than Daniel Craig's debut in the role. After being left the details of Mr. White, the man responsible for killing his love Vesper in the closing scenes of *Casino Royale*, *Quantum of Solace* opens with Bond racing through the streets of Siena to get away from a fleet of gunmen. When at last he finds himself in the clear, Bond pulls over to haul Mr. White out of the boot and he and M begin their interrogation. A member of a mysterious troublesome organisation, Mr. White is just the start a trail that leads all over the world and influences limitless governments and powerful figures.

Before you know it, however, Mr. White escapes, freed by a double agent inside MI6. Of course, Bond is sent to chase, so when the mole doesn't last long despite a stunning free-run along Italian rooftops, 007 squeezes all the information you can get out of a dead operative before jetting off once more.

Tracking down the organisation to environmentalist Dominic Greene (Amalric), and soon aided by Greene's jilted lover Camille (Kurylenko), Bond takes the mission upon himself to uncover all he can about Greene and the people behind Vesper's death, before attempting to stop their first devastating plan.

Though less gritty and edgy than the superb *Casino Royale*, *Quantum of Solace* certainly isn't the horror show many critics have suggested,

although a few flaws are all too obvious to ignore. Tracking more towards the normal action template, Bond loses a lot of his character and charm in pursuit of Vesper's killers as the story focuses largely on the, gorgeous as they do look, big budget chase sequences, in contrast to *Casino Royale*'s concentration on Bond's inner turmoil just starting out as an agent. The plot also gets lost at times along the way, as the narration feels padded out with several story quirks that only complicate matters.

However, you'd be wrong to think *Quantum of Solace* is a big disappointment as a result. The story is still fairly entertaining and with Daniel Craig's second turn as James Bond proving equally as vibrant, you won't want to take your eyes off the screen. Olga Kurylenko provides a superb foil to Bond's boyish allure, while Mathieu Amalric is an equally intelligent and slippery adversary. Sadly, as is the expected James Bond story, a second 'Bond girl' comes into the story, and Gemma Arterton plays farcical character agent Strawberry Fields, seemingly on screen for little more than the obligatory sex scene.

Without a doubt playing second fiddle to *Casino Royale*, *Quantum of Solace* can't claim to have reached new heights in what has become a relative reboot for the character, Daniel Craig, however, continues his meteoric rise in the acting world, and his performance will win a lot of plaudits. *Quantum of Solace* deserves to be seen, but in the long run, is unlikely to be considered a James Bond classic.

★★★★★





EAGLE EYE

Directed by: DJ Caruso Starring: Shia LaBeouf, Michelle Monaghan, Rosario Dawson, Michael Chiklis & Billy Bob Thornton
 Studio: DreamWorks Pictures Distributor: Paramount Pictures
 Release: Out now (USA) October 17 (UK)

With posters plastered everywhere and anywhere, Eagle Eye is the action/thriller blockbuster that many were hoping would kickstart a slow autumn release schedule ahead of the Oscar hopefuls at the turn of the year.

Imagined by Steven Spielberg some 12 years ago, at a time when some of Eagle Eye's technology was truly science fiction, it is released at a time when now almost anything is theoretically possible, if not available on the shelves.

Taking orders from an all-seeing, all-controlling woman on the end of a phone, Jerry Shaw (LaBeouf) must follow her instructions or risk becoming the first of many casualties of a conspiracy he is himself being framed for.

Returning home find his flat filled with an arsenal of lethal arms and biological weaponry, he is forewarned of the FBI's impending arrival but chooses to ignore the escape advice. The mystery woman, however, is still very much in charge, and hijacks Jerry's one phone call to break him out of the investigation room and lead him to Rachel Holloman (Monaghan), another coercing into helping.

Together the pair are instructed to fulfil several tasks or fear the lives of their families as the full extent of the terror scheme starts to be revealed before with a tense, breakneck ending.

For a film that makes demands of the cast to race around on foot for scenes on end, and chase sequences that recommence but a moment after the previous climax, the action feels strangely superfluous to the story and never really develops the plot in any way. This leaves much of Eagle Eye feeling empty and cold as the non-stop pace struggles to sweep up the viewer, a particular problem considering the two-hour running time.

A slick, glossy exterior attempts to cover up Eagle Eye's misgivings, helped by another eye-catching LaBeouf performance, but it is the often laughable technology that puts a nail in the coffin of hopes for this becoming another action/thriller classic.

Eagle Eye will please fans of the likes of *The Fugitive*, in what is a solid and mostly entertaining, if frequently ridiculous, Spielberg pipedream, just don't expect miracles.





FLY ME TO THE MOON

Directed by: Ben Stassen Starring: Trevor Gagnon, Christopher Lloyd, Philip Bolden, David Gore, Tim Curry & Nicolette Sheridan
Studio: nWave Pictures Distributor: Momentum Pictures
Release: Out now

Apparently when Apollo 11 landed on the moon three flies hitched a lift, saved the day and make it back down to Earth before the Russian flies could scupper their attempts in the Space Race. It all starts when Grandpa tempts his grandson Nat to follow his dreams and strive for adventure. After building their own fly-sized rocket ship, in the fields shadowed by the real Apollo launch pad, Nat and his two best friends, I.Q. and Scooter, strum up the courage to make their lunar flight a reality.

After sneaking onto Apollo 11, and then into Buzz Aldrin's suit for his first few steps on the Moon, the three flies make their dream a reality in what should be a charming, uplifting film about friendship and chasing your aspirations, but then again, this isn't a film made by Pixar.

Somehow, despite its sub-90 minute length, *Fly Me To The Moon* feels far too long and drags on in the boring set-up and timid conclusion, a major issue when the film's target audience is children. The script struggles to engage with barely a funny joke throughout, only pronounced further by wooden vocal performances and meagre character interaction.

The film fails to make you fall for its would-be charming three young flies, in part due to the plain and underdeveloped CGI animation and an pointless use of 3-D imagery which is badly done as the best of times.

Fly Me To The Moon is harmless no doubt, but in a year when animated cinema has brought us *Wall-E*, this film looks even more disappointing.



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PINEAPPLE EXPRESS

Directed by: David Gordon Green Starring: Seth Rogen, James Franco, Danny McBride, Gary Cole & Amber Heard
Studio: Apatow Productions Distributor: Columbia Pictures
Release: Out now

Stoner comedies have been given a bad name in recent years, from last year's *Smiley Face* all the way back to *How High* in 2001, but proving his mettle once again with the grip of a pen, Seth Rogen with *Pineapple Express*, will win hoards of fans back.

Rogen plays process server, and serial stoner, Dale Denton, whom while sitting in waiting to deliver the latest subpoena witnesses a murder by the local drug lord and a policewoman. Fraught with panic, Dale races back to his dealer Saul Silver (Franco), and for fear of the gang tracking them down, the pair drive off to hide in the forest for the night.

As Dale and Saul start to unravel the mess they've found themselves in, two gun-toting henchmen only ever one step behind, prove the paranoia is more than your average weed-induced worry, as *Pineapple Express* branches into the action realm with car chases and fire fights.

With Seth Rogen on screen and penning the film, you'd expect *Pineapple Express* to serve up a good deal of laughs, but backed by a reinvigorated James Franco and the emerging talents of Danny McBride, the end product is 2008's funniest film to date.

Despite the final action sequence lasting just that bit too long, in America alone the film has already made three times its budget and after the first trip, you'll be equally impressed a second or third time around.



TROPIC THUNDER

Directed by: Ben Stiller Starring: Ben Stiller, Jack Black, Robert Downey Jr., Brandon T. Jackson, Steve Coogan & Jay Baruchel
Studio: Red Hour Films Distributor: Paramount Pictures
Release: Out now

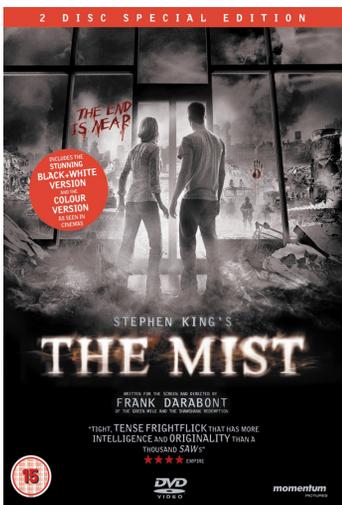
Returning behind the camera for the first time since 2001, co-writer/director/co-producer/actor Ben Stiller's *Tropic Thunder* is more than your average comedy as the cast star as actors playing roles in another film. Following the production team of an epic war film, in-movie director Damien Cockburn (Coogan) is struggling to keep to schedule and his actors in check. After failing to film the one-chance multi-million dollar explosion sequence is at the wrong end of the studio boss' fury and given one last chance to resurrect the project.

Advised by war veteran Four Leaf Tayback (Nolte), Cockburn rigs cameras throughout a local jungle, wrought with guerrilla fighters, and dumps the actors in the middle, leaving them to fight their own way out.

While it certainly doesn't provide quite enough laughs to be considered a comedy classic, with the performances and timing of experienced actors Ben Stiller, Jack Black, Robert Downey Jr. (whom plays a black soldier) and even Matthew McConaughey's side part, *Tropic Thunder* will keep you chuckling along and never starts to drag towards boredom. The funniest character and scenes, however, come from a surprising Tom Cruise cameo. Donning a fat suit to play the studio boss behind the war movie, Cruise's performance, closing the film with a hilarious hip-hop dance, will leave you in tears.

On the whole, *Tropic Thunder* might not be quite as good as the whole experience, faux trailers for each 'actor' et al, deserves but adds another thoroughly enjoyable film to the Frat Pack filmography. Ben Stiller has made an entertaining sub-two hour escapade that despite not quite making the most of a great idea, will adequately occupy your weekly film time.





The Mist

Based on a Stephen King novella as unwitting shoppers are trapped inside a local supermarket by a mysterious mist which hides a deadly secret within, sadly let down by an unfulfilling ending.

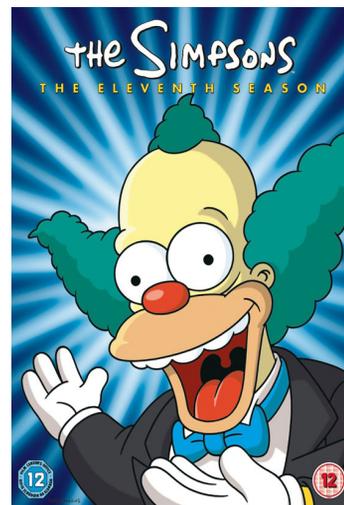
Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



The Guard Post

Tense Korean horror that suffers from an over complicated plot and rushed narration despite the interesting story. A steady effort but lags behind director Su-chang Kong's last film, R-Point.

Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



The Simpsons: The Eleventh Season

Now in a worrying state, season 11 of The Simpsons showed early signs of the downhill yet it is still an excellent collection of cartoon comedy history, providing ample fun.

Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



A Complete History of My Sexual Failures

Dumped by almost every girlfriend since the age of 11, director Chris Waitt tracks down his exes to find out where it all went wrong, in a remarkably funny, if voyeuristic, film.

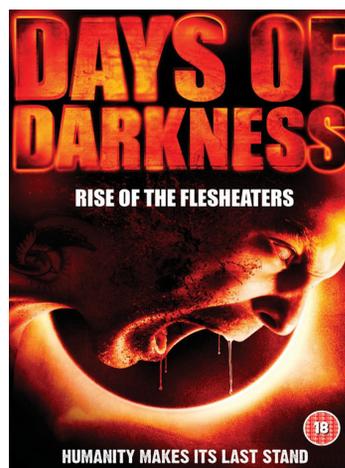
Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



Horton Hears A Who

Innocent animated comedy as Horton the elephant finds a speck of dust, only for it to house an entire town. Jim Carrey is oddly cast in the lead but kids will be laughing right to the finish.

Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



Days of Darkness

There was a lot of promise in this B-movie horror but as the zombie story takes a strange twist the plot rapidly becomes a farce. Coupled with the pedestrian pace and you'll be left very disappointed.

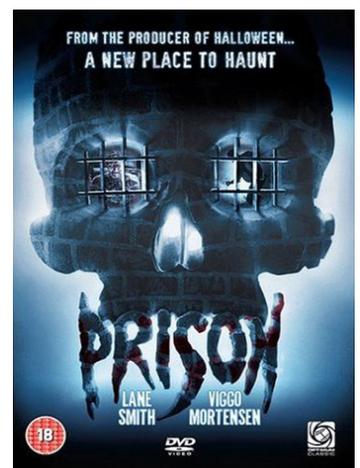
Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



The X-Files: I Want to Believe

Mulder and Scully come out of retirement once again to solve another mysterious story. While I Want To Believe will keep fans happy, it plays out like an average episode.

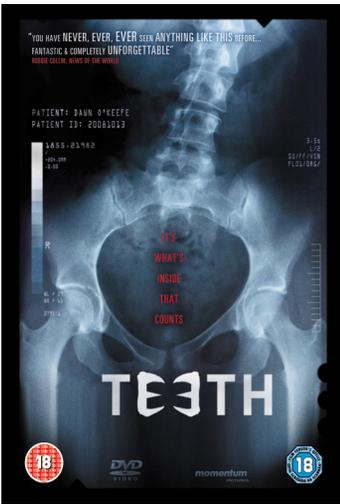
Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



Prison

One of Viggo Mortensen's first films, directed by the man behind Die Hard 2, Prison sees an abandoned penitentiary re-opened only for the new inmates to be haunted by remnants of the past.

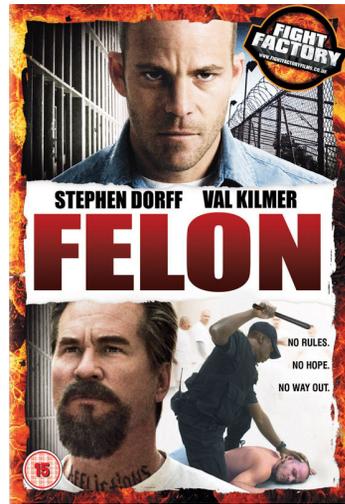
Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



Teeth

Entertaining indie breakthrough about a girl who has a peculiar physical condition. Makes for painful male viewing but offers the laughs to pull it off. Set to become a big cult hit despite a slow start.

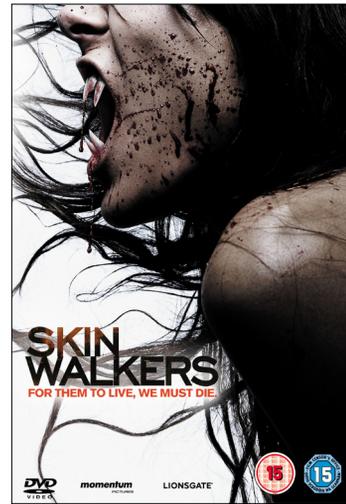
Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



Felon

Following the trials and tribulations of a loving husband and father harshly sent down for protecting his home. Val Kilmer makes an appearance but it lacks the seriousness of prison drama classics.

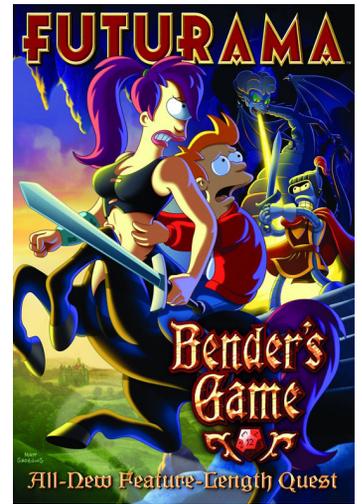
Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



Skinwalkers

Werewolf chase action/thriller that struggles to get beyond the stylistic direction. The action is gripping enough but the story severely struggles to engage as the film draws to an expected close.

Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



Futurama: Bender's Game

Back for the third of four straight-to-DVD movies, Futurama is just about back to its best as the crew are found themselves lost in spoof world of Dungeons and Dragons.

Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



P2

Nerve-wracking horror as a security guard chases a woman through the basement of an office block. Will keep you on the edge of your seat but lacks the bite of co-writer Alexandre Aja's previous work.

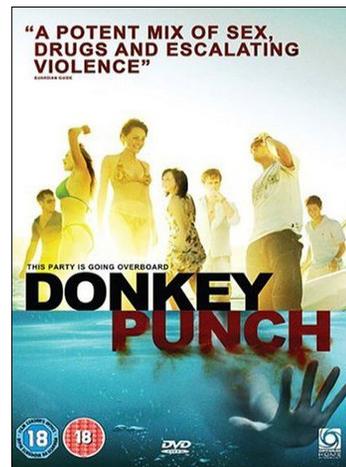
Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



Family Guy: Season Seven

Back to its best in the last couple of seasons after a slump that saw it get cancelled, Family Guy's Season Seven is brash and crude but undeniably funny.

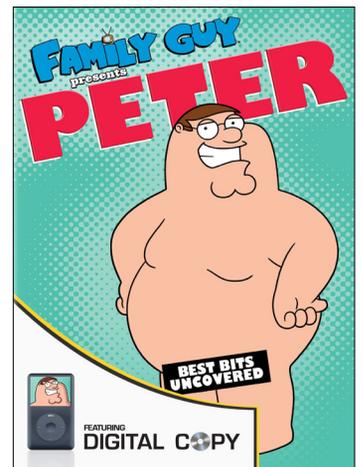
Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



Donkey Punch

Raw british slasher, set on a boat in the open sea. While Donkey Punch is over indulgent at times, the action is quick and claustrophobic and the violence is effective and powerful for a debut.

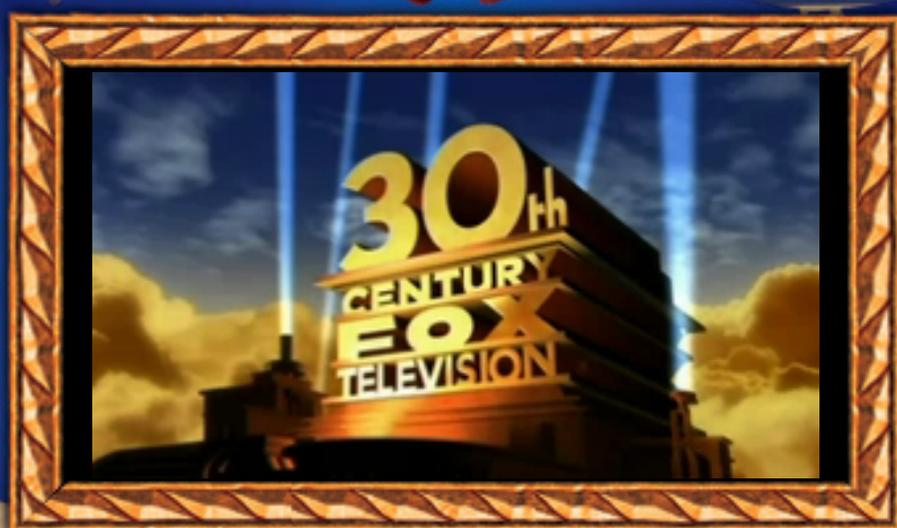
Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



Family Guy Presents Peter: Best Bits

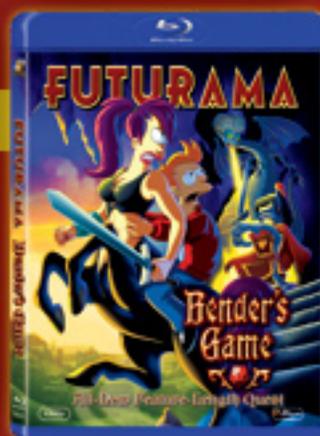
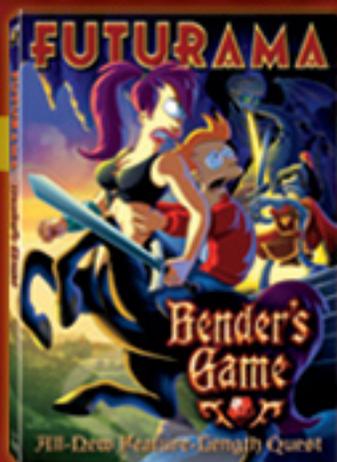
A collection of Peter Griffin's best episodes over the seven seasons of Family Guy, which provides the perfect introduction for newcomers and a greatest hits for old fans.

Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



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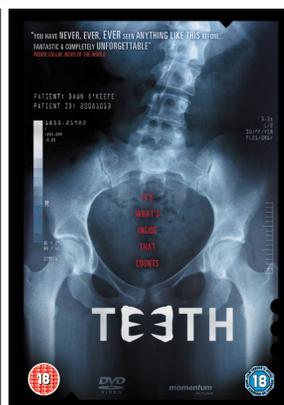
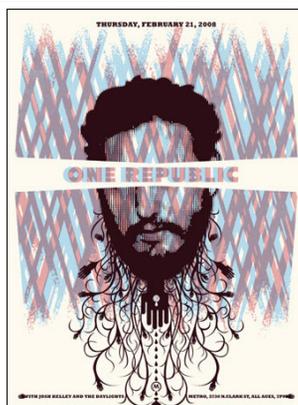
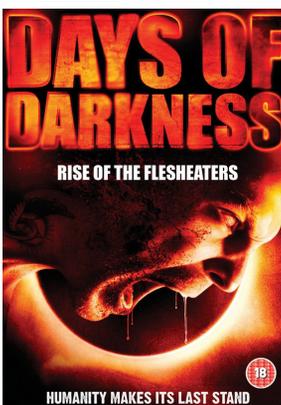
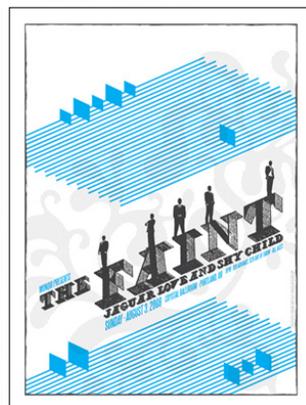
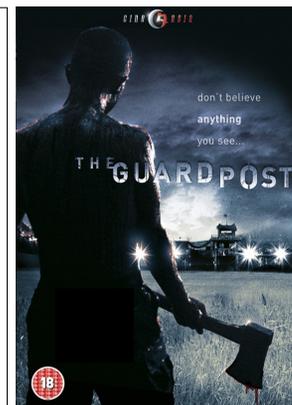
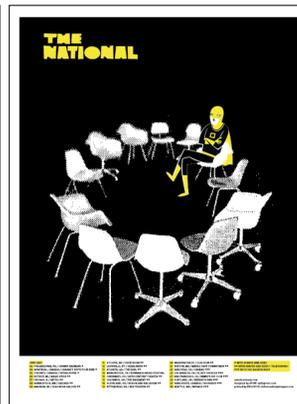
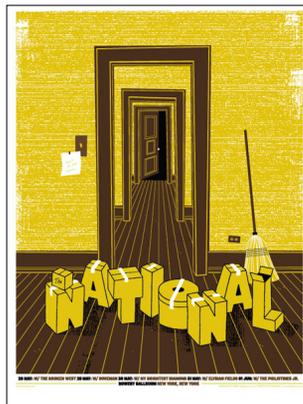
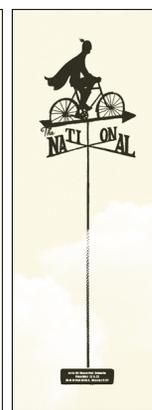
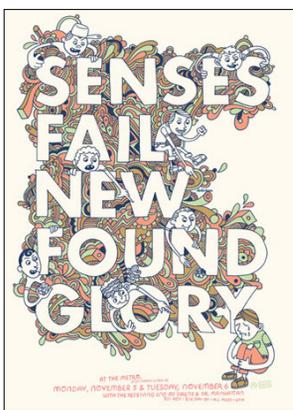
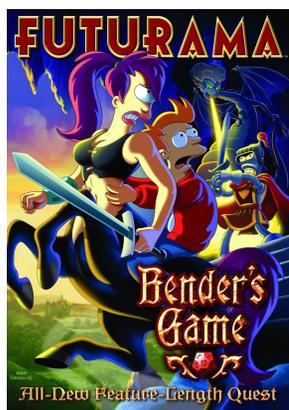
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To celebrate our third birthday and relaunch under our new name Fan the Fire, we're giving you the chance to win a tonne of prizes from throughout the issue, in a prize pot worth over £500 (\$850). The 1st prize winner takes home 10 stunning screen-printed posters from our art section and 8 of this month's featured DVDs including Futurama: Bender's Game, some Bond goodies and some Teeth pants. Two 2nd prize winners will win 5 posters each, 5 DVDs, and some Bond prizes and three more runners up take home some Teeth pants and the film on DVD. For your chance to win, simply answer the following question:

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Email your answer to competitions@fanthefiremagazine.com, and to help us provide a little information about our readers for our advertisers, please include your age, gender, the country where you live, level of education, job, annual income and whether you have download Fan the Fire/LOAD Magazine before. Don't worry, information will not be associated with your name or address, and will not be passed onto third parties. Deadline 15/11/08.



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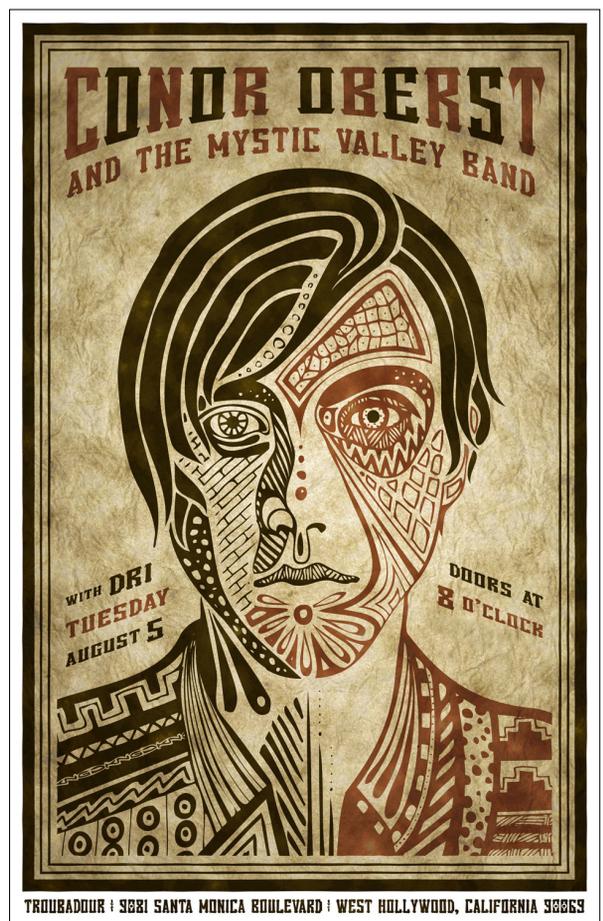
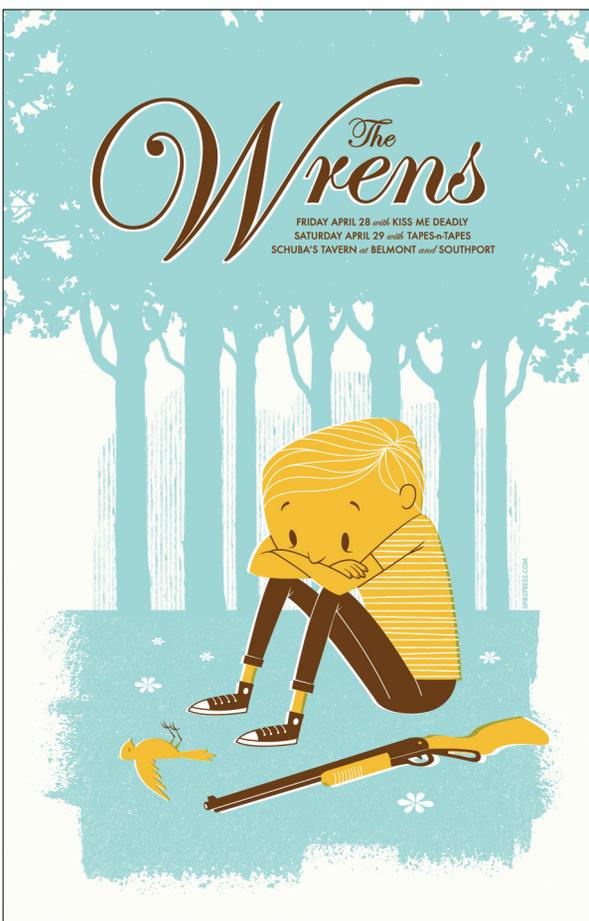
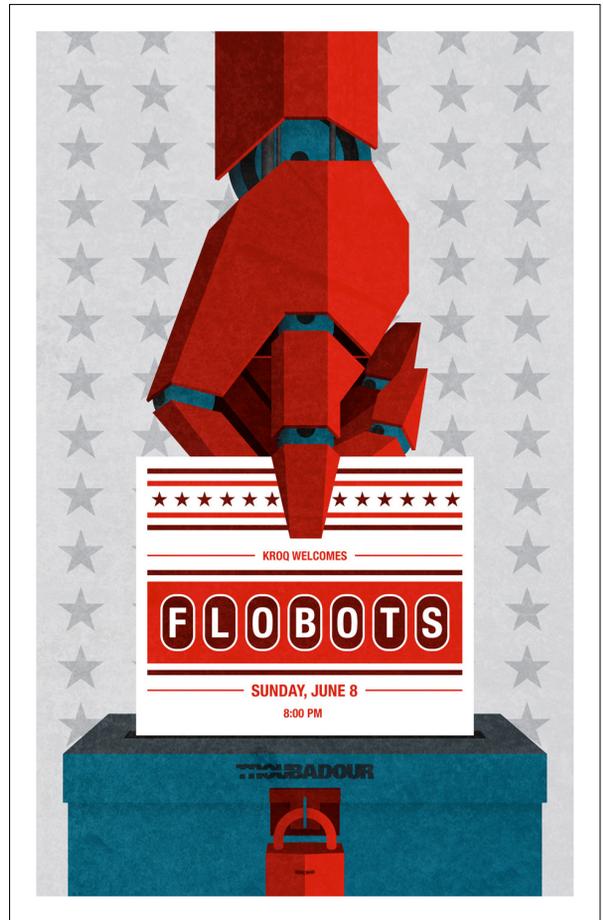




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- 12 LOUISVILLE, KY / HEADLINERS **
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- 16 COLUMBUS, OH / THE BASEMENT **
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- 19 PITTSBURGH, PA / REX THEATER **

- 20 WASHINGTON DC / 9:30 CLUB **
- 21 BOSTON, MA / MIDDLE EAST DOWNSTAIRS **
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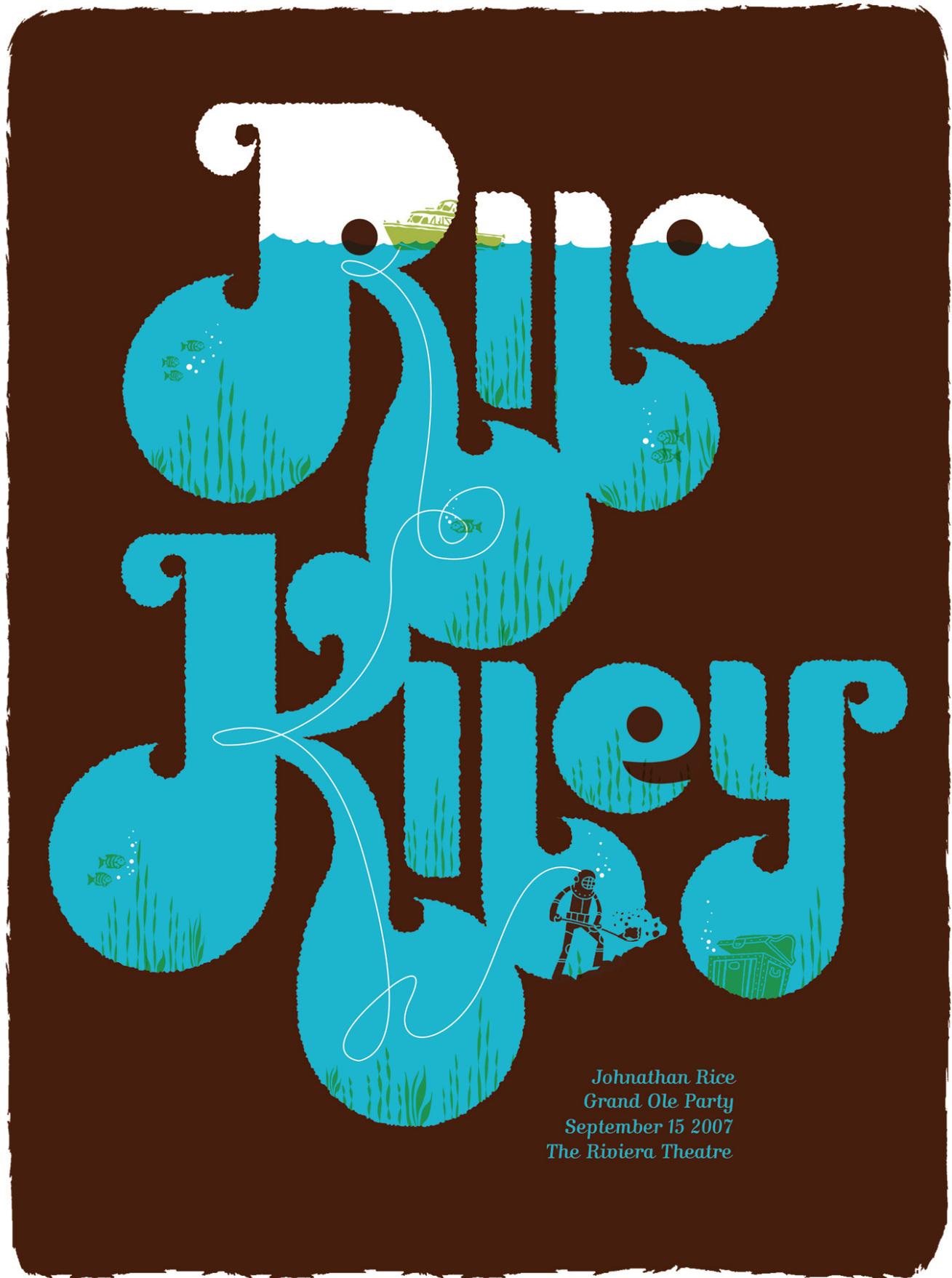
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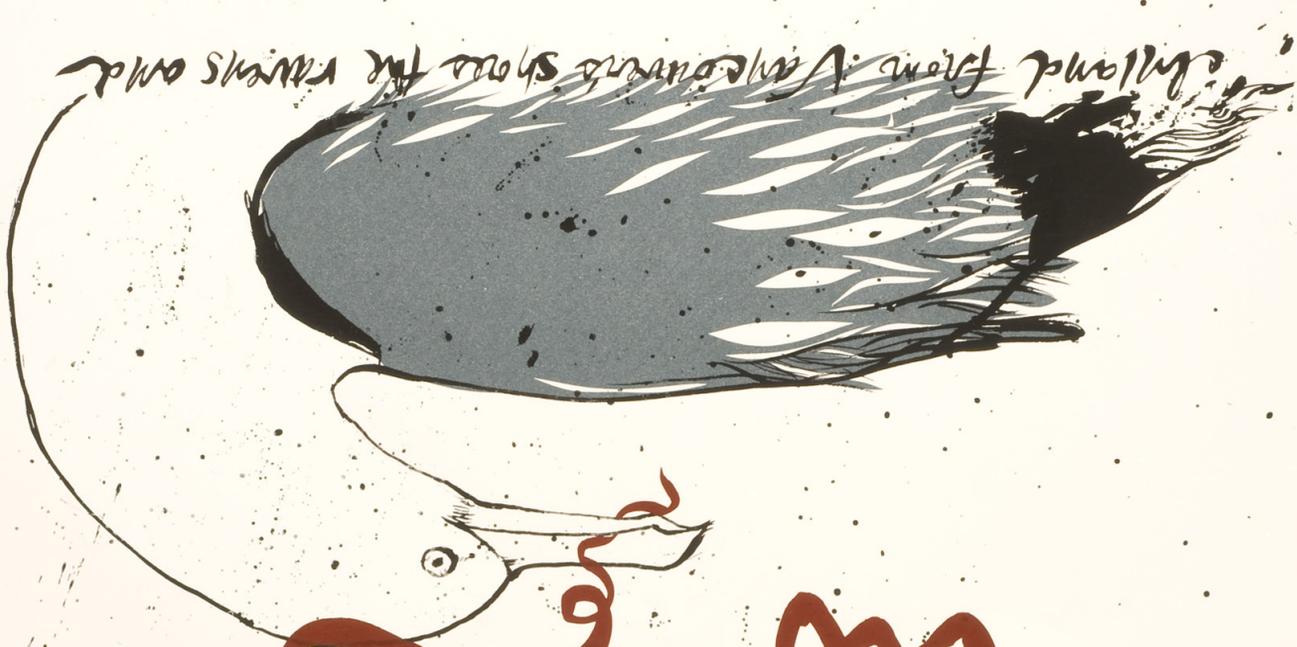
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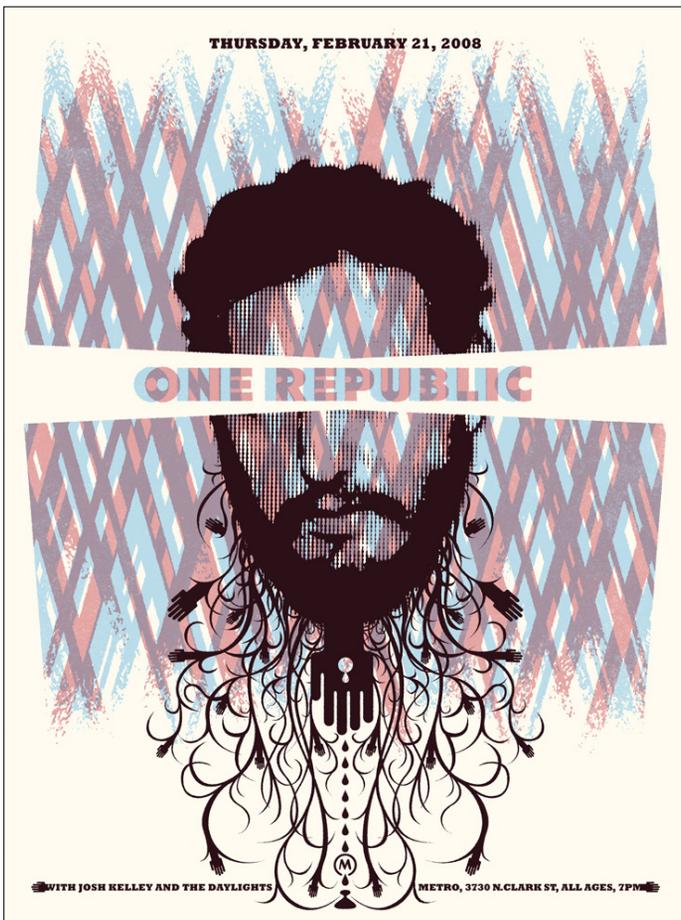
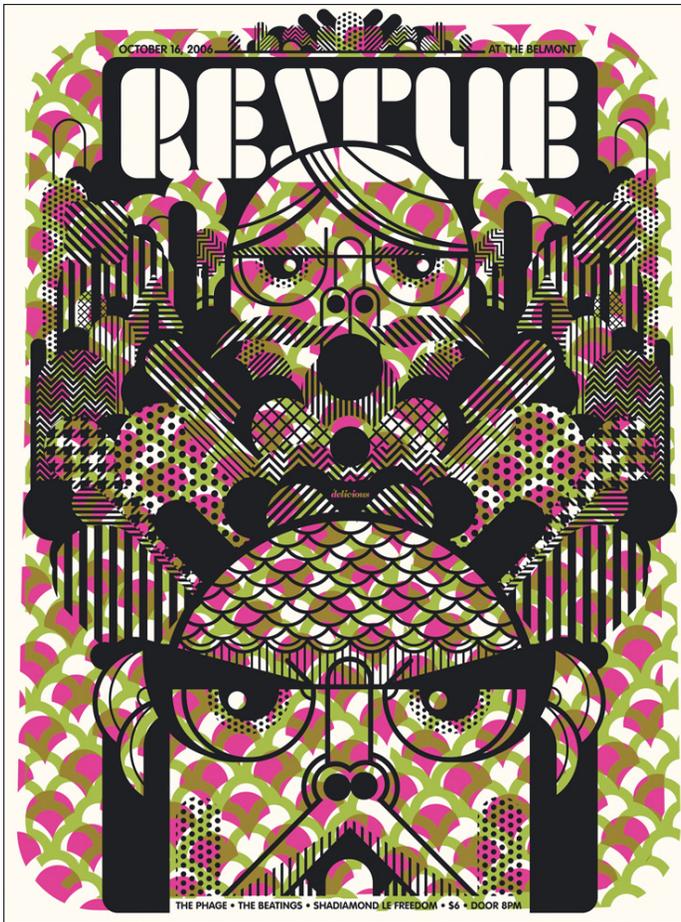
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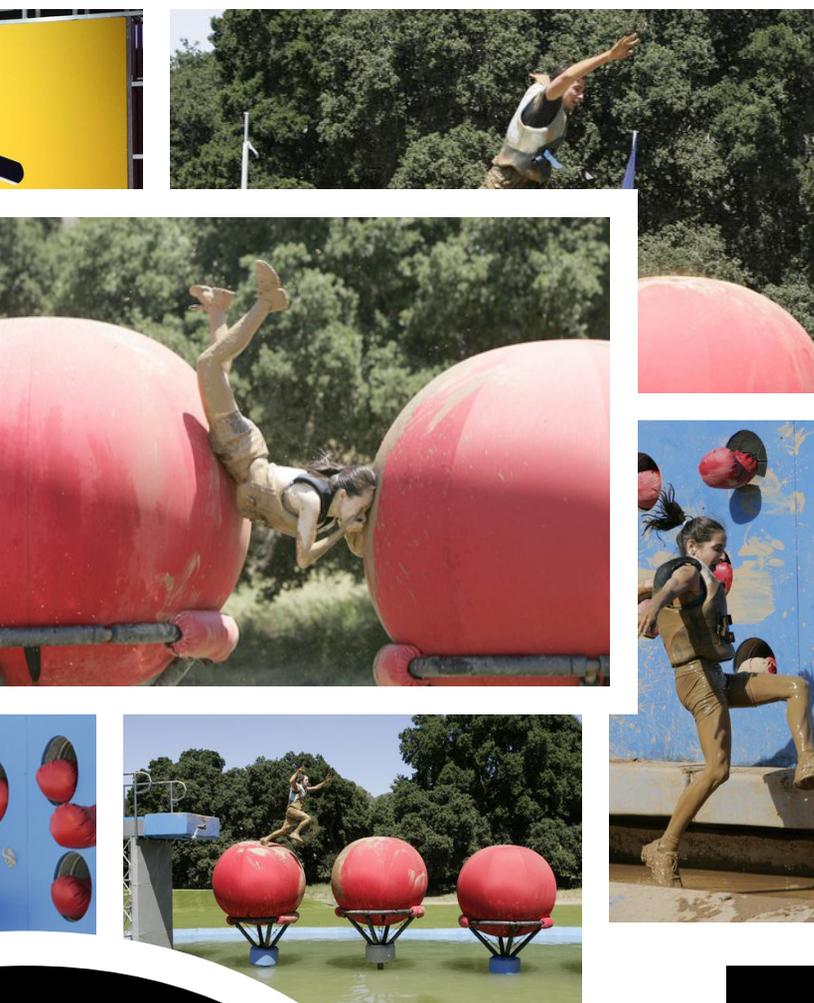












addy
addy



action
game
shows are
back

Given the immense online popularity of cult Japanese gameshow Takeshi's Castle, it's not surprising all-action gameshows are making a comeback. Pitting energetic contestants against numerous and increasingly huge obstacle courses the format has been developed and reproduced across the world, and none more successfully than by ABC in America.

Airing from last June, Wipeout became the most popular in the key 18-49 demographic over the whole summer, with viewers quickly becoming addicted to the high octane action as contestants jumps across toppling blocks, climb along walls with boxing gloves flying at them from every angle and swinging across huge water drops, in the shortest amount of time. The falls, thrills and spills make for great television, with countless clips appearing on YouTube to claim millions of views over the last couple of months alone.

Initially given an 11 episode run, ABC recommissioned a 16 show second season to air next year, but Wipeout's roaring success is better measured by the number of countries wanting to use the format for their own shows.

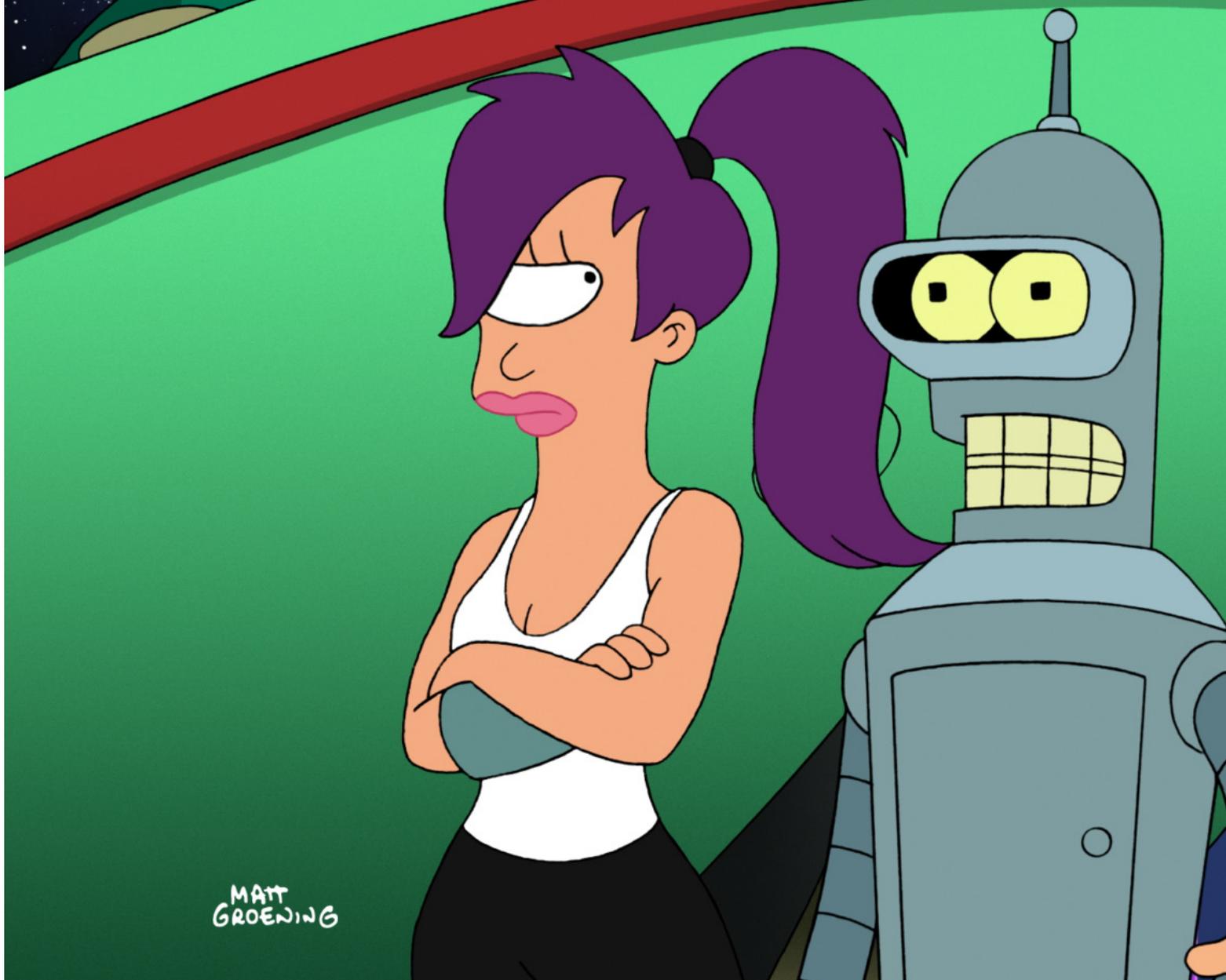
“CONTESTANTS ARE REQUIRED TO CONTORT THEIR BODIES INTO VARIOUS TETRIS-ESQUE SHAPES TO SLOT THROUGH A RAPIDLY ADVANCING WALL”

Licensed by over 20 countries, two obstacle courses have been created in Argentina for overseas nations to use for their own versions of the show. In the UK, the BBC are lucky enough to own the rights, currently filming over the next month with the premiere due early spring.

Arguably even more popular online, the 'Brain Wall' segment of Japanese 'Tunnels' 'Thanks to Everyone', aptly nicknamed 'Human Tetris', is the latest adaptation, proving just as successful as Wipeout. As the name would suggest, contestants are required to contort their bodies into various tetris-esque shapes to slot through a rapidly advancing wall, or fear being pushed back into a pool of water and losing points for your team. Renamed 'Hole In the Wall' for international editions, Fox secured the show for the States, currently going out on Thursdays as two teams compete for a cash prize. The BBC once again were first on the scene, but their version sees celebrities make a fool of themselves to win money for a chosen charity. Television is fun again.

HOLE IN THE WALL AIRS THIS FALL WITH WIPEOUT RETURNING 2009.

“Bender's Game spoofs dungeons and dragons as the Planet Express delivery crew set off on yet another dangerous mission”



Back to the **FUTURAMA**

The cult cartoon has been back for almost a year now, but after several years off the air, the next straight-to-DVD movie is one of the most anticipated cartoon capers in the digital age. We examine the story behind The Simpsons' less well known, yet arguably more adored, younger brother.



At a time when it was gaining higher critical ratings than sister show *The Simpsons*, Fox inexplicably ceased production on fan favourite *Futurama*. Since its launch in 1999, the cartoon quickly amassed a die-hard cult following, left shell shocked when in 2003 it was announced creator Matt Groening and his team would be concentrating solely on the adventures of the *Simpsons* family.

Charting the adventures of a New York pizza delivery boy, who accidentally cryogenically freezes himself, waking up 1,000 years into the future, Fry becomes a cargo delivery worker for his closest living relative Professor Farnsworth, whom despite being over 100 years older, is Fry's distant nephew. The mere setting has always allowed for such vast plot development it made it even more shocking Fox called time on

production. Countless re-runs later and boxsets were still swiftly moving off the shelves; fans felt it was only a matter of time before the powers that be came to their senses and commissioned new material.

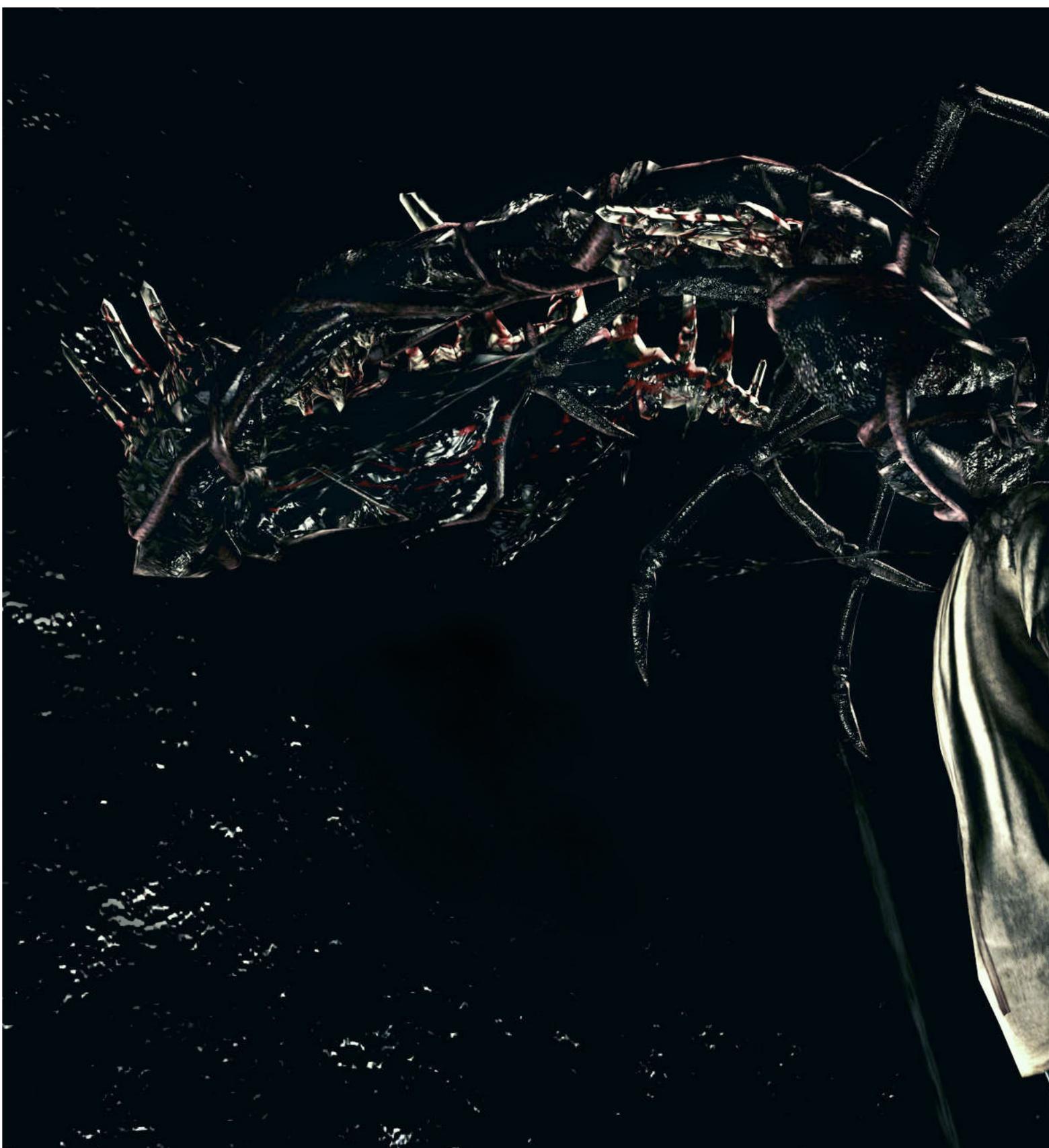
For those in the know, last year's return will be old news, with the series brought back in the form of a straight-to-DVD feature length movie, with 3 more in the works, later to be chopped down into individual episodes as a fifth season.

Bender's Big Score came first, parodying *Futurama's* cancellation in the opening scenes, told the story of Bender travelling back through time to steal famous and expensive artefacts, ripping the time continuum apart for Farnsworth to fix in film number two, *A Beast With A Billion Backs*. After their attempts to save the World hits a snag, an evil tentacle creature takes over Earth.

The latest movie is another space escapade, but for the first time, will deal more with fantasy than science fiction. *Bender's Game* spoofs *dungeons and dragons* as the Planet Express delivery crew set off on yet another dangerous mission. Attempting to infiltrate the world's only dark-matter mine, the source of all space fuel, Fry and co are dragged into a world of wizards and sorcery, fighting off yet another malicious enemy with thoughts of domination.

Seasoned fans are in for another treat, as the writing stands up much better than the latest seasons of *The Simpsons*, with the fourth and final DVD movie due in spring 2009. Speaking of the final instalment, *Into The Wild Green Yonder*, executive producer David X. Cohen has revealed he would be content if it were the last *Futurama* they ever get to make, but fans, I'm sure, will want the seasons to go well beyond these latest adventures.

FUTURAMA: BENDER'S GAME IS RELEASED ON DVD AND BLU-RAY ON NOVEMBER 3RD IN THE UK, AND NOVEMBER 4TH IN AMERICA.



The series to be first coined 'survival-horror' makes its full debut on next generation consoles after hitting even greater highs in its last full outing; **Resident Evil 5** has a big reputation to live up to, but only a fool would think Capcom are not once again up to the task... ➡➡

BIOHAZARD



When a series announces it's trying to reinvent itself, things can often go wrong. It's often a misguided attempt to draw a flagging franchise into the modern mainstream; things that were popular ten years ago are not always apt material for comebacks. But Capcom's long running Resident Evil series, which will be in its thirteenth year when the next installment is released, is an example of how to come back with a bang.

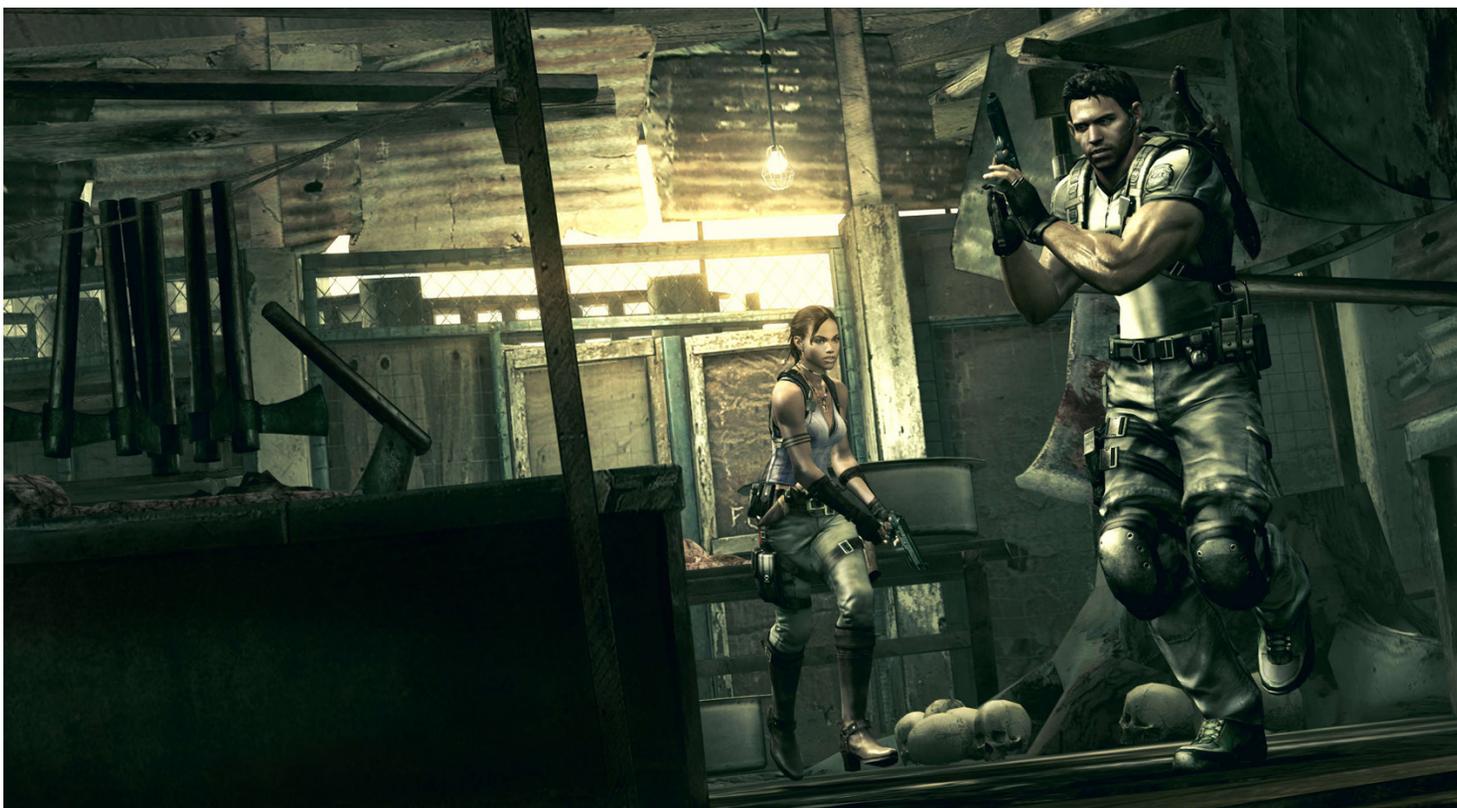
The revival began in early 2005 with Resident Evil 4. It was clear by this point that the series, old hand though it may have been in the survival-horror genre, was losing the qualities that made it so influential in the first place. It was retreading old ground and it was time for a change. Instead of reviving the long overused and old-fashioned game play quirks, Resident Evil 4 decided instead to remember what made the original games great and redesign that formula.

Gone, for example, was the frustrating control system, the most cynical of all the genre's long-standing mechanics. Yes, it added to the

fear factor and the sense of desperation, but not being able to move around effectively in a game world is ultimately frustrating and ridiculous. In 1996 gamers could forgive such qualms because they did not know any better; nowadays those kinds of mechanics would never even be considered in a developer's meeting. Go back and play the original Resident Evil and you'll see why. A classic though it may be, it's almost unplayable in the context of modern gaming. Even the Gamecube update, sporting shinier graphics and better sound, still did

not manage to overcome that fundamental flaw.

But the control system overhaul was only one of the elements that made Resident Evil 4 such a critical success. By removing the fear instilled by incompetent control systems, the focus was placed firmly on action orientated fear, a prospect which had long-time fans concerned in the run up to release. They shouldn't have worried. Context sensitive actions, quick pacing and a variety of meaty weaponry made the fighting not simply an upgrade, but a game



play feature in itself, whereas in the past it had always played second fiddle. Enemy designs and animations combined with the trademark Resident Evil atmosphere (which was maintained despite a drastic shift in location) ensured the scares still took centre-stage, however, and the game managed a feat not often achieved in gaming; to fully satisfy fans of both genres at once. Capcom, then, should be applauded for managing to maintain the look and feel of the series despite giving the whole thing a considerable overhaul. Other developers take note: when you do it right, imaginatively updating an ageing franchise will not only keep the existing fans happy, but also bring in a whole new generation.

Now it is time for the next chapter. Given how much of a changed system we saw in Resident Evil 4, it was always going to be more evolution than revolution, but given that game's qualities it doesn't really matter. The player once again finds himself in control of Chris Redfield, who has turned up in various titles in the series, most prominently as one of the main protagonists from the original game. Details of the plot though have not been forthcoming. Producer Jun Takeuchi has revealed that the storyline concerns the origins of the zombie-creating virus that has plagued the series for

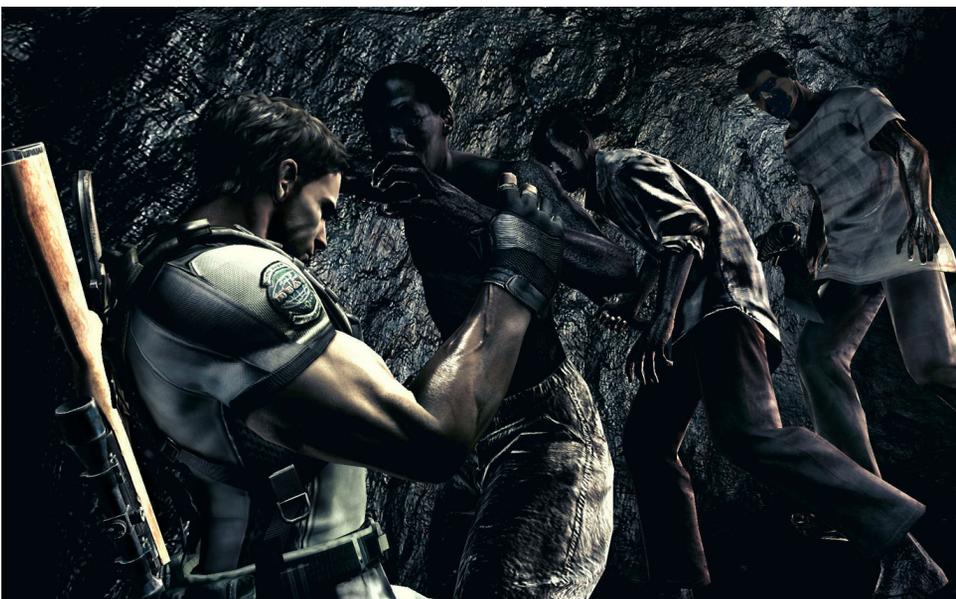


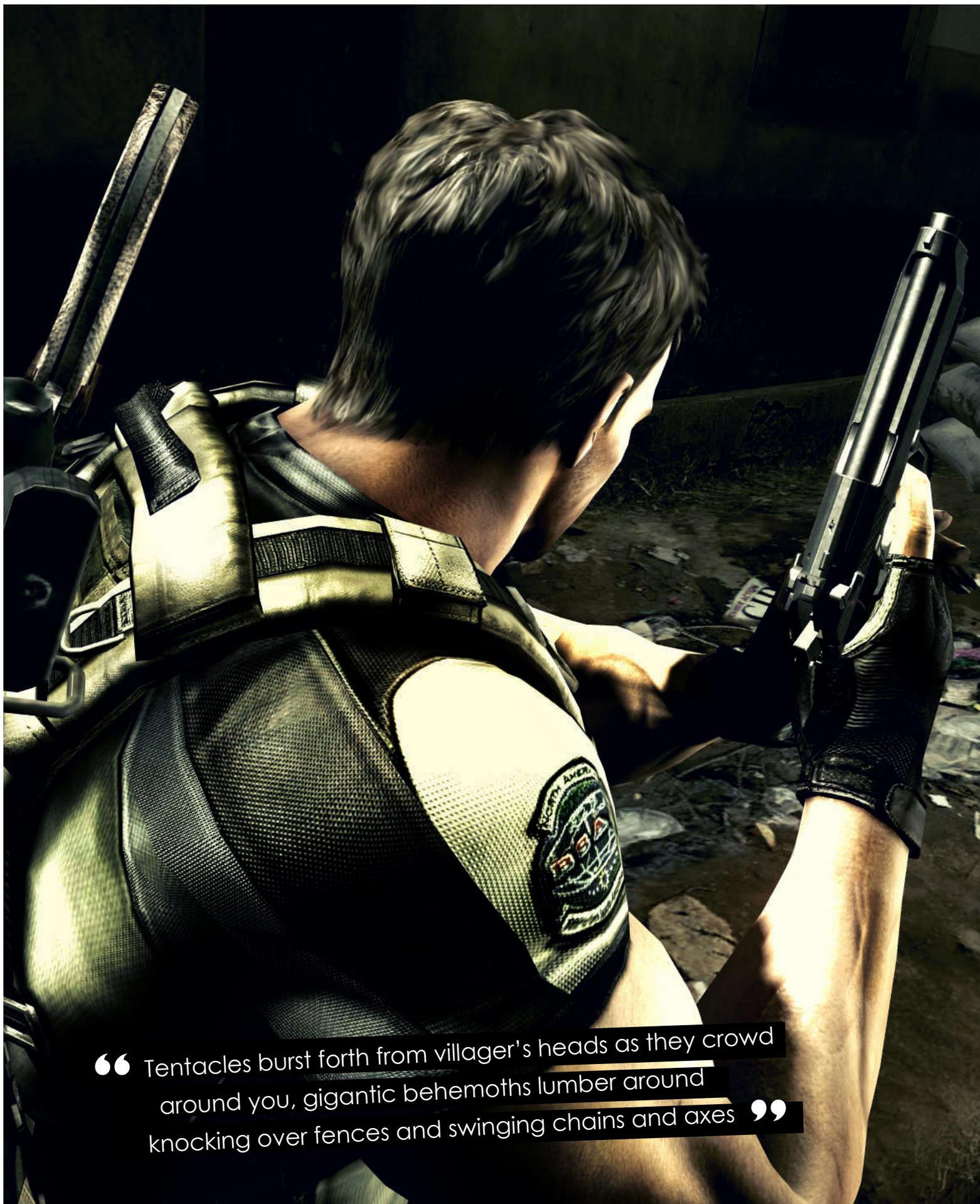
so long, and that the player will be accompanied during the game by a female sidekick called Sheva Alomar. If this relationship can be fleshed out in a similar fashion to the one exemplified in the Half Life 2 series, for example, then it could make an excellent addition to the action. Preview demos have already shown glimpses of the context sensitive actions available to the player: in one instance, Chris, faced with a chasm too wide to cross, was able to physically throw his partner over to the other side, and provide covering fire from his safe location. Mechanics such as these were part of what made Resident Evil 4 so compelling, those moments in tight areas when you are low on ammo and you anx-



iously bar the doors with furniture to prevent the hordes outside from getting in, desperately taking potshots from the windows made the fast paced action both memorable and, crucially, scary.

Again like its predecessor, Resident Evil 5 makes another considerable geographical leap, this time landing in a mountainous region of Africa, where locals have been transformed into hideous, violent monsters and stirring volcanic activity threatens the spread of a new virus strain. From the promotional material already released, including an excellent and action-packed trailer, the fresh environment seems to suit the game well. It has been proven on many occasions that games do not need to be experienced in ➤➤





“ Tentacles burst forth from villager's heads as they crowd around you, gigantic behemoths lumber around knocking over fences and swinging chains and axes ”



perpetual darkness to evoke fear. Sometimes broad daylight, oppressive sun and wide-open spaces are just as frightening. Chris' foes, too, will surely not disappoint. Imaginative creature design has never proved a problem for the series, even in its later, less glorious days, but the monstrosities on show here are spectacularly disturbing.

Tentacles burst forth from villager's heads as they crowd around you, gigantic behemoths lumber around knocking over fences and swinging chains and axes, and, of course, the familiar chain-saw wielding enemies are back once again. Standing out as well as the great design is the host of impressive animations that bring these creatures to life. They lunge, leap, interact with their environment, grab hold of the player; all wrapped up in an engine that looks truly spectacular.

Aside from our two protagonists, Chris and Sheva, the trailer reveals a supporting cast of mysterious, larger-than-life characters, the most sinister of which being a silent, cloaked man hiding his face behind a creepy bird mask. If the game's story can match its looks, Capcom could potentially have a modern classic on their hands.

Resident Evil 5 is undoubtedly one of the most exciting prospects on the horizon for action-horror gamers everywhere. Xbox 360 and Playstation 3 owners can have faith that they are going to receive, if nothing else, a similar experience to that of the previous game, and that can't be a bad thing. Devil May Cry, Capcom's other long-running action-horror series, has already made a successful transition onto current-gen consoles; it is unlikely that Resident Evil 5 will be any less exciting when it hits next spring.

RESIDENT EVIL 5 WILL BE RELEASED ON XBOX 360 AND PLAYSTATION 3 ON MARCH 13 2009.

QUANTUM OF SOLACE

Format: Xbox 360 (reviewed), PS3, Wii, DS, PS2, PC Developer: Treyarch
 Publisher: Activision Release: October 31 (UK) November 4 (USA)

It's a well known and long running trend in the games industry that the majority of film-to-game adaptations are rubbish. Usually it's the games that are rushed into production to coincide with cinematic releases that suffer the most; by contrast, instances in which developers have adapted the intellectual property in order to make an entirely new game have fared better. Creative incorporation of the Star Wars license, for example, gave birth to the Knights of the Old Republic series. Nobody surprised these days when a game comes out on the same date as its film counterpart and is immediately critically panned. Even worse, the films themselves are often pretty and so the fans who buy the games are left even more disappointed. But as developers know they'll probably still shift hundreds of thousands of copies regardless of the actual game so it's not hard to see why this keeps happening.

So with all of this negativity surrounding the sub-genre of 'film-games' why is it that Quantum of Solace isn't awful? James Bond games have been wallowing in various shades of mediocrity since Rare's outstanding Goldeneye adaptation way back in 1997; surely Treyarch (developers of the 360 and PS3 versions) haven't achieved a milestone as grand as that? To be blunt, no, they haven't, but they have managed to craft a game that hovers well above the usual film-to-game blandness.

This is a flawed game, no doubt about it, but one that is certainly capable of pulling a few punches. For a start, it's highly authentic; all of the big names from the films reprise

their roles here and are given reasonably lifelike representations on screen. Bond himself looks comfortably like Daniel Craig and of course has his voice, which for some reason adds a lot to the immersion. Then of course we have that fully-licensed score which drifts in and out of gameplay at crucial moments and, in the same way that every Star Wars game ever made gets kudos for its score and sound effects, greatly assists the atmosphere of the game. All the explosions and shooting would be a lot less interesting if it wasn't James Bond running around causing all this havoc.

So it all feels very much like Bond; but how does it play? Well, it's a mixed bag to be honest. There's nothing fundamentally wrong with the way this game plays, in fact it does a lot of things well, but there's just nothing special about it either. If that sounds a little ambiguous, then it hits the nail on the head. This is a game you could very much survive without ever playing; however, if you do play it you'll still have a blast. And that is why it would be wrong to be too harsh on this title. Despite its myriad of detractors, it's always at least giving you a guilty pleasure.

This is, for the most part, a straightforward first person shooter, which deviates into popular current territory by allowing the player to move into third person and take advantage of a fully-integrated cover system, the kind of mechanic you'll be familiar with if you've played recent games like Gears of War or, to a lesser extent, Grand Theft Auto 4. The cover system works well, and is easy and fun to use. It also adds to the immersion; the game lets you



know at every possible opportunity that you're playing as Bond, switching to third person for actions such as climbing up ladders and taking cover. There are a couple of minor irritations, however; the player has the ability to press the Y button to vault over cover obstacles but for some reason only half of the objects in the game can be vaulted, and there is no way to tell which ones they are until you run close up to them. In the middle of a hectic gunfight, when one wrong move might put you down for good, this can be a little grating.

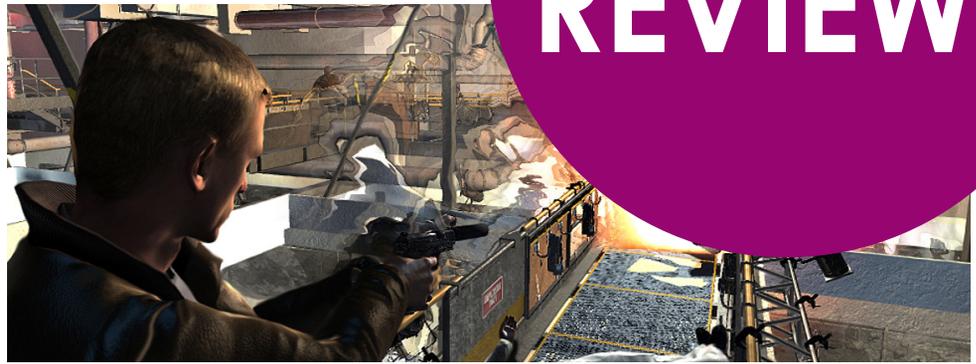
Similarly, the player is unable to vault over cover without first leaving that cover, again occasionally exposing you at the wrong moment. The final problem is that, inexplicably, when you enter cover in a crouched position you are forced to stand up to leave it, meaning another press of crouch button is required. This may sound like splitting hairs, but in the game's stealth sections (which are optional but quite enjoyable) it gets frustrating.

Stealth sections are just one of the ways in which Treyarch have attempted to vary the gameplay. This is to their credit, and the game's, because otherwise there would have been one less star at the bottom of this review. As I say, stealth sections are optional. By this I mean that certain areas which must be bypassed to continue are ripe for stealthy activity. You can choose to go in guns blazing, and will have to fight off extra guards for your recklessness, but choosing to complete the areas without being discovered is fun and also gives you access to some special achievements, as well as a different sort of chal-

lenge. Stealth is enhanced by the phone gadget that Bond utilises throughout the game. As well as showing your objectives and extra bits of data, the phone also cleverly displays the locations of nearby enemies and cameras once you have hacked into a local server, making stealth perhaps a little easy, but still rewarding. The majority of players will probably choose to play some stealth in order to shake up the experience which, in the long shooter passages, can get a little stale.

In order to mix up the shooting (and there is a lot) Treyarch have included some friendly little touches that make fire fights slightly less run-of-the-mill. In almost all areas, there are environmental hazards such as electrical boxes and fire extinguishers that can be shot to gain an advantage over your foes. Shooting these occasionally triggers slow-motion sequences in which enemies are sent flying through the air in spectacular fashion. Another neat addition is the incorporation of another currently in-vogue gameplay mechanic: context sensitive actions. By getting up close and personal with the game's many enemies, the player can trigger 'takedowns' in which the camera switches to third person and a series of button presses must be made in order to despatch the enemy in brutal hand-to-hand combat. These takedowns are repetitive and there aren't that many, but to be honest, like chain-sawing Locust in *Gears of War*, it never becomes boring. You can also activate these takedowns in two ways; simply by charging full tilt into enemies using the sprint button, or by sneaking up to them and depressing the right stick, allowing for more stealthy kills. There are also a couple of well-choreographed fight-recreations from the films, which I won't spoil here, that feature context-sensitive button pushing.

With all this on offer, it's disappointing that the core gameplay of *Quantum of Solace* – the shooting – is largely underwhelming. It is fun, but it is also unbelievably repetitive.



This is mostly due to a heavy reliance upon generic level design. In general the weaponry feels fairly weighty and, though generic, is decent enough to play around with, but the environments in which you can fire them are sadly lacking. It's infuriating at times, because the levels often display exciting and inventive sequences, but these are too often interspersed with corridor shooting of the dullest kind. Whilst some of the levels are artistically sound and realistic, some of the areas just feel like shooting galleries. The topography at times just doesn't feel natural; it feels too much like it was designed specifically for shoot-outs. There is one level mid-way through the game that takes place outdoors, and it's by far the game's weakest section; the layout of the scenery is so pedestrian it really takes away from the immersion and leaves you simply wanting to get it over with. Perhaps these problems wouldn't be so telling if the game wasn't so resolutely linear. You are almost never presented with any freedom in these environments and this adds to the sensation that you're being overly guided by your surroundings.

The title '*Quantum of Solace*' is slightly misleading (in a good way) because the game actually spends a lot of time re-enacting scenes from *Casino Royale* in the form of an extended, and embellished, flashback. It does follow the new film's plot, though, so if you don't want to know anything before you see the film, steer clear of this until you've seen it. There are a few cut-scenes dividing up the action and a series of strange and slightly dull expository sections that fill in the

storyline gaps between the levels. These basically amount to a computer screen cycling through images whilst characters talk over them, filling in holes that aren't covered in the missions. There is a multiplayer mode and the maps seem well designed and varied, and there is a nice weapon and gadget purchasing/upgrading system in place that should make the multiplayer something a little different, as well as twelve game modes across the maps. As with most titles, only time will tell if the game gets enough regular multiplayer competitors to keep in running.

But should you buy it? All in all, *Quantum of Solace* is a perfectly solid game with a number of nice gameplay quirks that fails to stand out in a packed shooter genre. The *Call of Duty 4* engine chugs away nicely underneath everything, conjuring up some pretty graphics but nothing that quite matches CoD4 standards; environments shift between bland and detailed, occasional textures feel a little washed out and models and animations are capable if generic. This, though, is a film-to-game adaptation that can be genuinely recommended.

There's not much here for those who don't like shooters, but this is still a far superior experience to the usual stuff fans of popular films are subjected to. A reboot to the game franchise that does not quite match the renaissance the films are currently enjoying, but nevertheless provides an enjoyable adventure of moderate length and some intense shooting.





SUPER SWING GOLF

Format: Wii Developer: Tecmo Publisher: Rising Star Games Release: Out now

Any golf game to hit the Wii will always be compared with the effortlessly simple, but remarkably entertaining, Wii Sports title boxed with the console from launch. Despite only offering 9 holes, hoards of gamers still spend time lumping golf balls down the Wii Sports fairways with the Wiimote swing control system. Hoping to take advantage of a new breed of golf gamers, Super Swing Golf takes the simple premise and attempts to add an extra dose of realism and depth.

The first difference is the swing method. Where as in Wii Sports, the height of your backswing with the motion sensitive Wiimote determines the pace of the shot, in Super Swing Golf you select the power on-screen and then the accuracy of your swing and direction of the Wiimote at striking point, denotes the quality of the shot. While at first, hitting the sweet spot on swings will be remarkably haphazard, but once you start to get into the game, it becomes ever easier.

Of course with a full golf game you'd also expect a lengthy single player campaign and Super Swing Golf doesn't disappoint. Despite the expected stock story of a young golfer battling their way past endless opponents, the actual matches are lively and addictive, giving you a thirst to keep playing until each character has been defeated.

Multiplayer is similarly entertaining, and with gameplay offering a number of special shots, unlockable courses, characters and clothes, despite the throwaway Pangya points system and the initially aggravating difficulty curve, Super Swing Golf is the best golfing experience on Wii.

★★★★★



BAROQUE

Format: Wii (reviewed) & PS2 Developer: Sting Entertainment Publisher: Rising Star Games Release: Out now

Released a full ten years after its initial Sega Saturn debut, Baroque makes the leap to the next generation Wii via the Playstation and an equally updated PS2 offering.

Following the standard RPG template, Baroque tells a story of the lead character who must fight his way down to the bottom of a holy tower to relinquish his sins and bring a sense of conscience back to his troubled future world.

You must fight your way past numerous enemies on each level to find your way to the exit in the standard turn-based structure, collecting new items, weapons and all important experience points along the way.

While the gameplay, graphics and lifespan are all sufficiently acceptable, the game's biggest flaw comes from the harsh method of resurrection whereby if a player dies, they are thrown back to the first level and the very beginning of your quest.

Though each level is randomly regenerated every time, even for lovers of RPG classics like Dark Chronicle, the method of advancement can become repetitive, closing doors to newcomers to the genre, however, for hardened fans, Baroque will offer plenty of hours of entertainment.

★★★★★



Fan the Fire #15

online November 14

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