



#22
MUSIC // FILM // ART // STYLE // JULY 2009

FAN THE FIRE

M A G A Z I N E

HOW NATHAN WILLIAMS ALMOST UNIDID YEARS'
WORTH OF WORK WITH ONE DRUG-FUELLED DISASTER
PERFORMANCE AT PRIMAVERA

WAVVES

PLUS
FLORENCE AND THE MACHINE
AND **LA ROUX** ALBUM REVIEWS
SHUTTER ISLAND
AND **IRON MAN 2** PREVIEWS
TRANSFORMERS 2 AND
(500) **DAY OF SUMMER** REVIEWS
ART BY **AMY CASEY**
AND **FASHION IN A PUDDLE**

FAN THE FIRE

M A G A Z I N E



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Making Waves

THE NEWBORN ALBUMS OF EUROPEAN POP MUSIC ARE CLOSE TO DOMINATING THE AMERICAN MARKET. BY JEFF LABRECQUE

THE NEWBORN ALBUMS OF EUROPEAN POP MUSIC ARE CLOSE TO DOMINATING THE AMERICAN MARKET. BY JEFF LABRECQUE

EUROPEAN POP MUSIC

"... upstarts I'm brook! I think one of the main things I realized; sometime in the new future it'll all start to settle down again."

in an interview on *Radio 1* before his album, *Wherever I Wander* (Atlantic), was released. However, it wasn't his interview on *Radio 1* that inspired him. In *Wherever I Wander*, he instead chose to tell his story in a more personal, intimate way. "I wanted to tell my story in a more personal, intimate way," he says. "I wanted to tell my story in a more personal, intimate way."

And forward, a new sound and style. "I wanted to tell my story in a more personal, intimate way," he says. "I wanted to tell my story in a more personal, intimate way."

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ART FEATURE

*Building
Connections*

JEFF KOONS (1955)

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JULY 2009 FINE ARTS MAG.

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FAN THE FIRE

M A G A Z I N E B L O G

home music film art style tv games magazine

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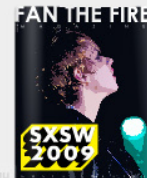
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FAN THE FIRE

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“...our iPhone app is done and ready to download...”

It's been a busy month in the Fan The Fire office. As you can see on the right, our iPhone app is done and ready to download, check out the sidebar for more information. Also this month saw our club night relaunch at London's trendy east end venue Catch. A huge thanks to every who came down to pack out the venue a couple of Fridays ago. The next one will be in late July but we'll tell you more about it next issue.

After his very public mental collapse at Primavera Festival and subsequently cancelled European tour, ironically it was their now highly debated future rather than what would have been an interview that has put Wavves on our cover this month. In the high profile, high pressure music industry, drug-fuelled mistakes of a show can happen a little more often than you'd expect but it was the importance for their career that made frontman Nathan Williams' mistake front page news. Still, more of that in our feature. We also review new albums from La Roux, Kap Bambino, Gossip, Florence And The Machine, Jack Peñate, Slow Club and a few more.

In cinema this month we preview two of the year's most anticipated films, Martin Scorsese's *Shutter Island* and *9*, as well as *Iron Man 2*, set to rule the box office in 2010. In the review stakes, we rule over CGI-heavy blockbuster *Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen*, fantastic summer love story *(500) Days Of Summer*, *Moon* and *Last House On The Left*, plus you can win a copy of *Gran Torino* on DVD in this month's competition.

After featuring her stunning work on our blog, our art section features artist Amy Casey for a full spread. The Cleveland-based artist has been making a name for herself of late, and with the help of Chicago's Zg Gallery is ready to step up her collection and take on the mainstream art loving public. Reno Ranger is back again for our style section, this time making light of a little rain, and André Pines chips in with his summer rules for staying cool, in the pool, or on the pitch.

Enjoy the issue

Sam Bathe

FAN THE FIRE MAGAZINE APP



For some time now we've made it a not-so-secret secret that we were developing an iPhone/iPod touch app. Well at last, it's here.

Automatically updating with the latest issues, and push notifications on the way in our next update, you'll be able to download and read every Fan The Fire at the tap of a button and experience the future of on-the-go magazine reading, in the palm of your hand.

The content and layout will be exactly the same, as the app offers you an overview of each page and the ability to zoom in to read articles or look at a style spread more closely. And what's more, as we offer our traditional PDF downloads or online Flash views for free, the app will be free too.

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MUSIC

Listen To More... Tijuana Panthers



Alongside neighbours in Costa Mesa, Japanese Motors (whom we'll be featuring in the coming weeks), Tijuana Panthers are filling in for the Strokes while the New Yorkers take time off to record a new album. The Panthers' bright, sparky and jerky indie rock feels refreshing as the underground music scene has headed towards electro.

Another great addition to the Los Angeles and Long Beach music crowd, Tijuana Panthers are set to follow in the footsteps of friends Delta Spirit in the coming months having just released an EP and slowly breaking out of the east coast city. Their lyrics are catchy and imaginative, guitar hooks are a-plenty, and the finished songs effortlessly listenable, over and over again. The band have just released a video for new single 'Creature', but make sure to also check out the standout tracks off their self-titled EP, 'Don't Shoot Your Guns' and 'Crew Cut'

YOU CAN LISTEN TO MORE TIJUANA PANTHERS AT
MYSpace.com/tijuanapanters

FILM

The Art Of Up



ART

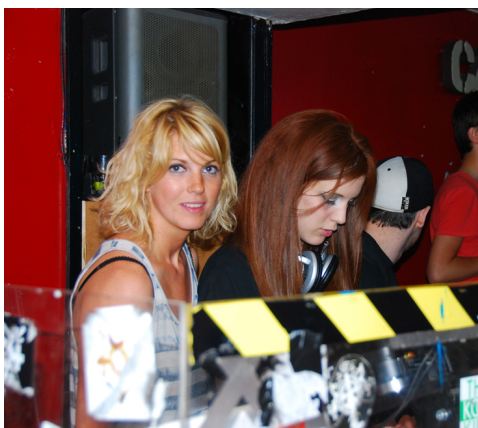


STYLE





FRIDAY NIGHT FIST FIGHT JUNE 5TH AT CATCH, LONDON





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Making Wavves

On the verge in indie stardom, underground star Nathan Williams is close to throwing away all the hard work he's put in over the last few months, but we haven't lost faith just yet

WORDS SAM BATHE



AFTER DECLARING WAVVES the standout new band of this year's SXSW, when we planned for a major feature, we were expecting it to be an interview after arranging to catch up with the duo on their huge European tour. Signs were ominous for the opportunity though on their first date across the Atlantic.

While the crowd still enjoyed their set, and the quality of their tracks still shone through, this felt like a different Wavves to their energised nature in Austin. At London's iconic Old Blue Last pub, drummer Ryan Ulsh was up to scratch but months upon months of non-stop touring and a rapid emergence on the music scene seemed to be taking its toll on songwriter/guitarist Nathan Williams. Last time in Europe, the band played 35 shows in 30 days and at SXSW they were booked for 13 in the 4 day festival. A hectic schedule for even the most experience musician.

then went on to momentarily forget how to play some of the tracks from the album he's over in the UK to promote.

The show, however, was still a success. Williams seemed physically and mentally drained but did well enough to win over the on-looking Shoreditch crowd, however, when the stakes were raised for Wavves' slot at Primavera Festival a couple of days later, no-one could say they similarly got away with it.

STUTTERING THROUGH a handful of tracks in between periods of directionless strumming as drummer Ryan attempted to provide a beat for Nathan's off-key guitar and all-over-the-place vocals. After momentarily wowing the crowd with best track 'So Bored', the Spanish festival goers became increasingly frustrated as he declared he'd rather be under the sun back in California than Spain and having to again be

a wasted opportunity to cement Wavves' burgeoning reputation, no one needs to remind him of that, and at last Williams now seems to be now taking the time off to gather himself, albeit at the cost of the rest of the planned European tour.

EVERY OTHER SHOW following Primavera was scrapped, including the London Luminaire date we were scheduled to interview the band at, due to be rescheduled later in the year. All eyes now will be on the band's comeback performance at Pictfork festival late July, and a warm-up in New York three days before. Whether drummer Ryan Ulsh will return to the stage with Williams, however, is up in the air. Gone from Wavves' line-up on their MySpace page, rumours are Williams will return with a new drummer, which is sad given the pair's previously compelling performances on stage, but whatever the line-up don't lose faith just yet.

"... upstairs I'm broke! I think one of the main things I realised; sometime in the near future it'll all start to settle down again."

In an interview with Fader last February, Williams spoke of being thrown into this new found lifestyle. Second album 'Wavvves' is about his frustrations with the boring day to day life in hometown San Diego, cooped up in his parents' pool house and struggling to find a direction for his efforts, and while he'd much rather be non-stop on the road, Williams admitted the pressure and sleepless nights were starting to catch up with him.

FAST FORWARD A FEW MONTHS and chatting to Williams before Wavves' aforementioned Old Blue Last show, Dazed & Confused revealed the extent of a lot of fans' worries. "... upstairs I'm broke! I think one of the main things I realised; sometime in the near future it'll all start to settle down again. People will start to forget about the record once it's been out for long enough and the touring schedule will become less hectic," proclaimed Williams who

reminded how his songs go. When the crowd then started throwing bottles at Williams on stage, Ulsh at last lost his patience with his partner in crime and after pouring a cup of beer over Williams, walked off stage. Event organisers cut power to the guitars and mics and Wavves' set was over.

A video of the incident has racked up 60,000 views, and counting, on YouTube, promising to document what will become an infamous moment in the bands history.

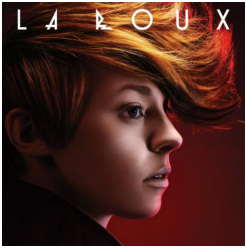
We're confident though, Wavves' performance at Primavera won't be the defining moment of a, to date, brisk career. Following the incident, Williams posted a now deleted blog entry apologising for his behaviour, bemoaning his remarkably poor decision to take a concoction of ecstasy, valium and xanax before the show. Primavera was one of Williams' biggest shows to date and

While Williams' petulant behaviour will turn a raft of potential fans off the band, the quality of Wavves' newly released album and new material aired at SXSW will still take the band to much greater heights. Their lo-fi garage rock recalls a grungy musical comparison somewhere between We Are Scientists and cult stars The Cribs.

If Williams can ride the storm and return more focussed than ever, and a striking third album in hand, all will be forgotten, so don't write Wavves off for the moment. In fact we'd still put a lot of money on them becoming one of the driving forces behind the new found lo-fi domination of the music scene in the months and years to come.

WAVVES' CANCELLED EUROPEAN TOUR WILL BE RESCHEDULED FOR LATER IN THE YEAR AND SOPHOMORE ALBUM 'WAVVVES' IS OUT NOW ON FAT POSSUM RECORDS AND WAVVES

LA ROUX 'LA ROUX'

RELEASED
June 29

The second of this year's electro-poppers hoping to make the breakthrough after Little Boots' blink-and-you-missed-it disappointment 'Hands'. La Roux on the other hand have staying power. Smacking of '80s electronica, La Roux's self-titled debut album feels like it could have been released in another age and yet is as current as anything else on the shelves. Though cynics might cry foul its vulnerability to repetition, tracks like anthemic synth ballad 'In For The Kill' and the addictive 'Bulletproof' easily win the electro-pop showdown.

★★★★★

KAP BAMBINO 'BLACKLIST'

RELEASED
Out now

The first of the post-Crystal Castles group of scream-electro bands to release what they hope to be the album that really breaks them into success, 'Blacklist' is actually Kap Bambino's third album since forming in 2001. With this record their sound is a far more accessible and much less likely to make your ears bleed after a listening session, though the incessant pace might not be for all. Still, amongst 'Red Sign', 'Dead Lazars' and 'Acid Eyes' there's a lot to like and proves faith in this French duo was far from unfounded.

★★★★★

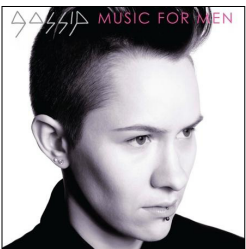
WAVVES 'WAVVVES'

RELEASED
Out now

The undoubted standout performers at this year's ever hectic SXSW music festival, Wavves' sophomore album 'Wavvves', note the extra 'v', captures every ounce of adrenaline that sets their live performances apart. Though at times it feels a little over reverbed by self-producer Nathan Williams, the lo-fi fuzzy garage rock has a certain charm and remarkable fullness to it. 'So Bored', 'Summer Goth' and 'Beach Demon' stand out as Williams bemoans his tiresome life in hometown San Diego but really the whole album is well worth the effort.

★★★★★

GOSSIP 'MUSIC FOR MEN'

RELEASED
June 22

Struggling for mainstream success before breakout 2006 and 2007 re-release single 'Standing In The Way Of Control', some might be surprised to hear 'Music For Men' is actually Gossip's fourth studio album. Picking up right where album 'Standing In The Way Of Control' left off, 'Music For Men' is another disco-punk offering. While it lacks the euphoric signature hooks of some of their music to date, 'Heavy Cross' is likely to become another club classic though after a strong start, the album starts to tail off towards the end, lacking depth in their sound.

★★★★★

KISSY SELL OUT 'YOUTH'

RELEASED
Out now

Building his reputation to date as a DJ and remixer, Kissy Sell Out's fruits now include fully fledged album 'Youth' but whether he should have strayed from his staple is a question still out there. The punk-electronica embodied by 'Youth' has a lot going for it, but under Kissy Sell Out's usually reliable hands it feels somewhat immature and self-indulgent. There are still a few dub-influence beats that come off but really this debut could have been a lot better if it were 'Young Adult'.

★★★★★

JACK PEÑATE 'EVERYTHING IS NEW'

RELEASED
June 22

Jack Peñate's spritely indie-pop debut 'Matinée' was the soundtrack to many people's summer of 2007, and for good reason. Something of a Kate Nash with a guitar, without selling out, Jack Peñate won a monstrous following en route to a very successful year. Similar to The Horror's recent transformation, 'Everything Is New' is a far step from his jerky guitar sound. Peñate's sophomore album will take a couple of listens to sink in, but its maturity and multi-layered sound, this dance-pop doesn't sound like it will ever age.

★★★★★

FLORENCE AND THE MACHINE 'LUNGS'

RELEASED
July 6

Touted as one of this year's breakthrough pop sensations on the very first listens of 'Lungs' you can see why. Brain behind the operation Florence Welch has written a collection of mesmerising songs far beyond her years. With cutting, incisive and clever lyrics layered on top of a flowing, cross-instrumental background, leaving her somewhere close to Bat For Lashes but far more upbeat in its feeling. Florence will be a big star, of that there's no doubt, and though 'Lungs' isn't perfect, it is a stunning 12 track debut.

★★★★★

AUTOKRATZ 'ANIMAL'

RELEASED
June 22

Pushed repeatedly on label Kitsuné's wonderful Maison compilations, autoKratz feel like they've been on the cusp of something great for a while now. Sadly 'Animal' though isn't the emphatic dance-electronica everyone was hoping for. Even on breakthrough single 'Stay The Same' their music lacks depth as if you're only hearing one side of a stereo recording. 'Animal' is not completely without merit, but you'd be better searching out last year's 'X-Marks Destination' by The Whip.

★★★☆☆

LET'S WRESTLE 'IN THE COURT OF THE WRESTLING LETS'

RELEASED
June 29

Unlike most so-called indie bands, Let's Wrestle actually sounds like it could have been made independently. While this means the vocals are often a little off-key and the odd guitar strum is misplaced, it only adds to their debut album rather than detracting. 'In The Court Of The Wrestling Lets' won't set the world alight but it's a very charming affair you could listen to for hours. Try to picture what The Young Knives would have been like if they were 15 years younger and you've got Let's Wrestle.

★★★★★

SLOW CLUB 'YEAH SO'

RELEASED
July 6

Continuing the resurgence of indie folk, Slow Club's highly anticipated 'Year So' doesn't disappoint. The vocal interplay between Charles and Rebecca has the potential capture the heart of the even most cynical listener as they sweep through a collection of adoring country folk tracks that transcend a generation. Though some of the latter tracks don't meet the high accolades of 'When I Go' and 'Giving Up On Love', 'Yeah So' is an album full of invention and good intentions that will live long in the minds of many.

★★★★★

SHUTTER ISLAND

RELEASED

October 2 (USA)

October 9 (UK)

For most, it will come as little surprise that the newly released trailer for *Shutter Island*, Martin Scorsese's latest partnership with Leonardo DiCaprio, looks brilliant. The ongoing screen relationship between Oscar-winner Scorsese, who now finally has his long overdue epithet, and multiple-nominee DiCaprio is bearing significant fruit, bringing out different sides and varied performances from the two men.

Admittedly, the three films they have previously worked on each have their detractors, in particular the divisive *Gangs of New York*, but this is another intriguing change of direction for the pairing and it looks great. The film is based on Dennis Lehane's 2003 novel of the same name and concerns the investigation of an asylum, located on and named after the titular island, which houses, as Leo tells us in the trailer, the "criminally insane." Alcatraz for lunatics, basically. On this island, clearly, there are strange things afoot; there is certainly a mystery to be solved. If this all sounds a bit gothic and B-movie, that's because it is, but in the best possible sense. Indeed, the trailer throws welcome nods in the direction of the psychological horror genre and features some wonderful quotes delivered in effective chewing-up-the-scenery style: "...you're a rat in a maze."

DiCaprio, clearing going slowly insane, looks effective in the role, as does Ben Kingsley as the manager of the institution. Around them the aesthetic of the film is bleak, layered in fog and firelight, and dripping with dread. Has Scorsese crafted something akin to Kubrick's *The Shining*? October can't come quickly enough.





IRON MAN 2

RELEASED
May 7, 2010

Although it isn't scheduled for release until May next year, Jon Favreau's superhero sequel is gathering steam, with principal photography already underway. The cast of the blockbusting original are securely in place, with the exception of Terrence Howard whose shoes, it was announced some time ago, are now to be filled by Don Cheadle. The particulars behind this decision remain unclear, with various rumours surrounding the decision. It's academic now, of course, and at least Cheadle is a reasonably talented replacement.

Additions to the cast include Scarlett Johansson as Black Widow, replacing the originally cast Emily Blunt, a Russian 'super-spy', and the newly rejuvenated Mickey Rourke, fresh from his wrestling success, as Whiplash, a popular villain from the comic book series who wields twin titanium whips as weapons. A photograph of Rourke in the role has been released, see right, and has generated a positive response from the majority of fans, despite looking entirely different to his ink and paper counterpart.

The plot is not fully known, however Favreau has stated that the film will deal with Tony Stark's growing alcoholism, a feature that was prominent in the comics. Whilst that suggestion does seem to point towards a 'darker' second outing for the character, as is the fashion, don't expect any Dark Knight levels of gloom here, as the light-hearted, almost whimsical tone of the first film will no doubt remain intact. The comic book invasion shows no signs of slowing and given the success of the first film, Marvel can expect this to be yet another superhero cash cow.





9

RELEASED
September 9

Shane Acker's 9 appears to continue the trend set by *Coraline* earlier in the year, and *Wall-E* last year, by accepting that dark themes and threat are not fundamentally 'too extreme' for children.

What was so great about *Coraline* is that it explored dark themes in a wonderful, imaginative, beautiful environment, and while there was threat, it wasn't exploitative or overbearing. As a character in the trailer for 9 succinctly suggests, "sometimes fear is the appropriate response."

Produced by an odd partnership of Tim Burton and Timur Bekmambetov, the film has an interesting, eerie look to it, showing flashes of Burton's influence in the art design and Bekmambetov's in the action, of which there appears to be plenty. The story follows a group of rag dolls imbued with life by their human creator, who struggle to exist in a post-apocalyptic world. They are numbered one through eight, and when they discover another of their kind, 9, voiced by Elijah Wood, things are soon to change. Unlike *Coraline*, which was created using stop-motion and touched up with CGI, 9 is fully computer generated but is designed to keep some qualities of the stop-motion technique.

The voice cast features supporting talent in the form of John C. Reilly, Jennifer Connelly and Christopher Plummer, and is scored by long time Burton collaborator Danny Elfman. It is aptly scheduled for release on 9/9/09.





TRANSFORMERS: REVENGE OF THE FALLEN

RELEASED
June 19 (UK)
June 24 (USA)

DIRECTED BY Michael Bay **STARRING** Shia LaBeouf, Megan Fox, Josh Duhamel, John Turturro, Tyrese Gibson, Kevin Dunn, Julie White, Ramon Rodriguez, Peter Cullen & Hugo Weaving

For a CGI-heavy, all-action adventure film, Transformers was more or less perfect. Sure, the story telling could have been a little tighter, Michael Bay was at the helm after all, but fans couldn't really have asked for any more. Still now, it's easy to lose a couple of hours reveling in the outright adrenaline and spectacle of Transformers but just how good the original was, posed a difficult problem for executive producer Steven Spielberg and his team, how do we better it? Speaking in advance of the Transformers' release back in 2007, the legendary filmmaker might have been joking when he commented "we're going to make the best one first", but despite a bigger budget and the return of all the major stars, there was always every chance his prediction would come true.

Picking up a little after the events of the first film, Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen sees Sam Witwicky (LaBeouf) about to head off to college, but when packing up his things finds a shard of the power-giving AllSpark. Desperately trying to revive leader the Fallen, when the Decepticons catch wind a remnant of the cube has been found, they step up their plans that will decimate the earth as we know it. Defending what is now their home planet, the Autobots, however, will do anything to stop their nemeses, as once again, humanity gets caught in the middle of the inter-robot war.

Directed again by Michael Bay, the narrative was never going to be spectacular, but the script of Revenge Of The Fallen also leaves a lot to ask for. Both the plot and dialogue are very slack and where the original kept it simple and effective, Transformers 2 tries to blend in a few too many story strands without ever developing any to enough detail. This is the first real stumbling block for new power house writing, and for other projects, producing, team Alex Kurtzman and Roberto Orci.

There have been signs of a decline in recent films, with tepid dialogue frequently threatening to boil over, but their imagination has always saved the day. Here they should have ground their ideas, and spent more time ironing out a better, more focussed plot.

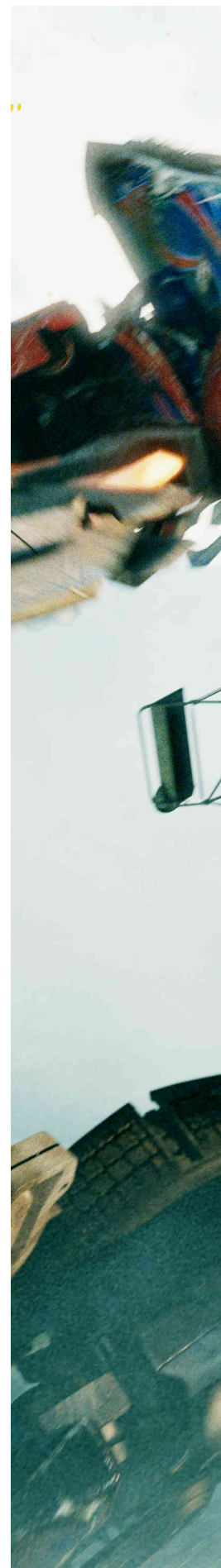
A lot of the frailties could, however, have been remedied in the editing room. At almost two and a half hours, Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen is substantially too long, lagging heavily after a promising introduction. More frustrating though is the film's tendency to stray into the ridiculous. The first film knew it is was fantasy but took the premise seriously, the only way the audience would then be compelled to believe in it. Here, Michael Bay uses a combination of ridiculous story telling elements and frustrating characters and quirks that undermine all the fantastic action. Similar to the monkeys in Indiana Jones 4, twins Mudflap and Skids' attempts to be funny fall flat on their face while R/C truck Transformer Wheelie is nothing but irritating.

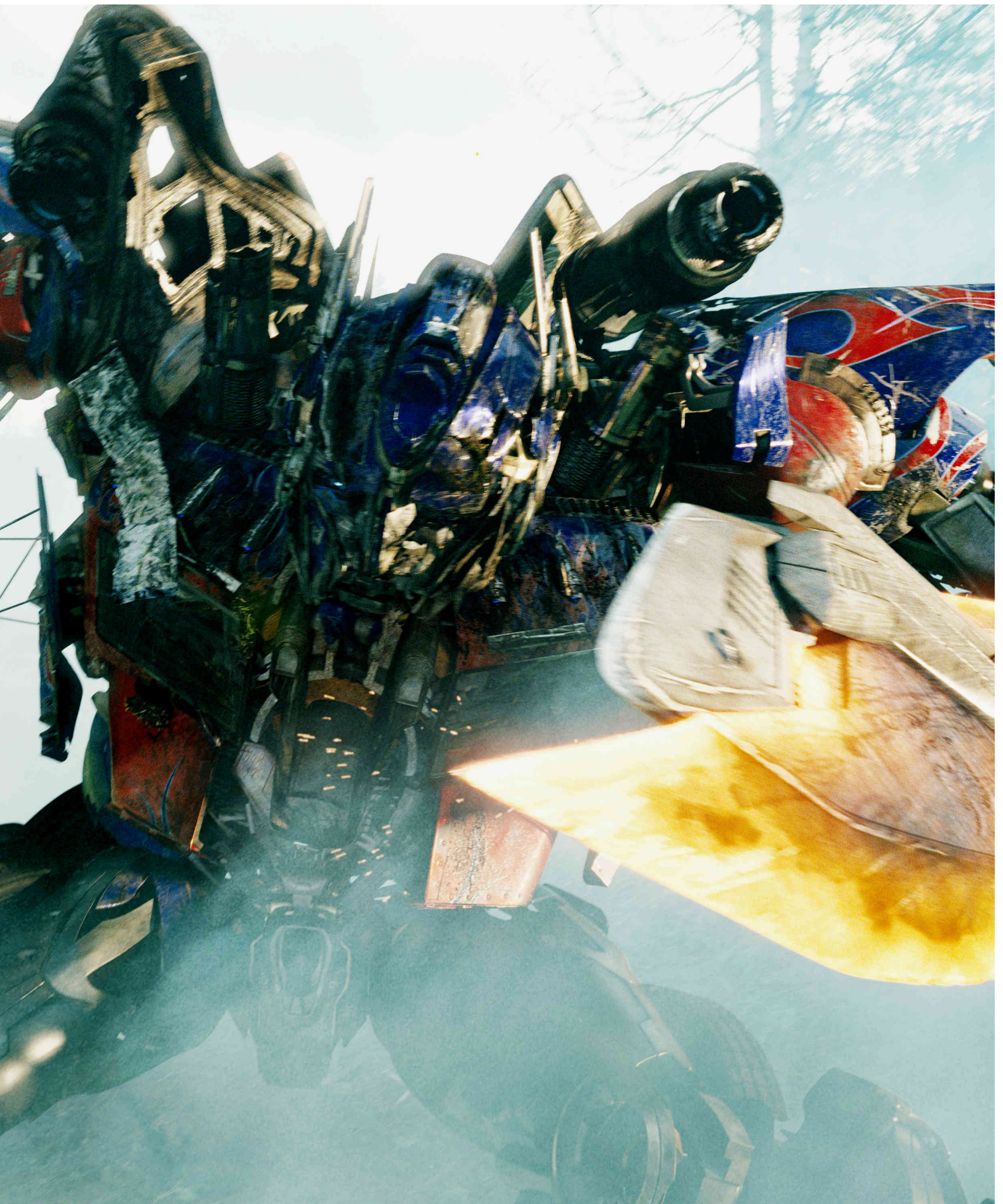
There is still though a lot to like about Revenge Of The Fallen. Shia LaBeouf, now a fully fledged Hollywood star after a fantastic couple of years since the original, has a captivating on-screen presence. He brings such excitement and passion to the role and delivers his comedic lines with surprisingly good timing. Bar the aforementioned twins and Wheelie, the rest of the cast do a decent job, with Megan Fox providing the expected eye candy, and perfectly glossed lips throughout.

Given the industry-leading CGI, you might be surprised to hear, if anything, Transformers 2 could do with a little more robot fighting. The action scenes are wonderfully implemented, especially the opening chase and closing showdown, we just need a few more of them. Over the lengthy two and a half hours, the set pieces feel few and far between, though this might be more owing to the stuttering plot development.

In the battle of the big robot movies, what seemed like an easy victory for Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen over Terminator Salvation has proven a draw. Both have their plus points, but equally their downsides, it's just frustrating that if the Transformers 2 took itself a little more seriously, it might just have blown audiences away the same way as the original did.

★★★★★





MOON

DIRECTED BY Duncan Jones
STARRING Sam Rockwell, Kevin Spacey, Matt Berry & Robin Chalk

RELEASED
 Out now (USA)
 July 17 (UK)

Moon is the first movie from director Duncan Jones, and he is also partly responsible for the story, alongside screenwriter Nathan Parker. For both men it is their first real foray into wide release film-making, so are the times now that a first-timer "indie" film can be a science fiction movie set in space. But whether or not the plot works best as a movie might be argued.

Moon takes place on, you guessed it, the moon, set in the near future, Sam Bell is the sole astronaut on a mining base nearing the end of his 3-year run there, and is more than ready to get back to his wife and kids on Earth.

The story kicks in when Sam starts getting headaches, and after he has an accident on a routine check-up on one of the mining vehicles, knocks himself out. And that's when it all starts getting a little weird. The isolation of space starts to play on his mind and the base's computer is politely ignoring his questions, so he starts to suspect there might be someone else on the base.

Sam Bell is really the only character in the whole movie, and it's a lot of pressure for actor Sam Rockwell, but a challenge he lives up to. He has to play a variety of different extremes of Bell's mood, encompassing frustration, anger and depression, all while trying to keep from losing his control and hold the mission on course.

Rockwell seems to take his character from a young child to an old man in front of your eyes and holds it all together with a quiet burn that gives the picture an intensity, calmly opposed by the film's direction.

Jones maintains simple directing techniques, preferring to take all

the risks in the story rather than with his camera work. Though at times the film goes for exterior shots that merge the dark greys with slow, low-gravity movement, the direction is nicely intertwined with the original classical score for a very good effect that finds itself well placed throughout the film.

Unfortunately Moon layers on the philosophy too heavily, especially in the first half of the film, and it seems all Jones is interested in is challenging the audience to contemplate identity and life-worth. Though this certainly can work in a good sci-fi film, too much can bring the pace to a crawl and this is regrettably what happens in Moon.

Had the screenplay been a little more refined and kept plot more in mind than theoretical themes, it would have been a tighter ride and much easier for lightweight viewers to swallow. There are times when the tempo is the focus of the whole film; the score picks up, the camera drastically slides. These combined with the funny smiley face graphic of the moon-base computer and Sam Rockwell's violent frowns can create good moments. The ping pong scene is a perfect example.

The old school take on sci-fi with unpolluted interior shots meeting low-budget small film style makes for an interesting experience, though the design might be a better practice in a novel due to the story demanding a slower rate to get the most out of it.

Certainly recommended for long-time science fiction fans who enjoy their space stories combined with philosophical raps, as it is a great story told in an appealing way.

★★★★★







(500) DAYS OF SUMMER

RELEASED
July 17 (USA)
September 4 (UK)

DIRECTED BY Marc Webb **STARRING** Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Zooey Deschanel, Geoffrey Arend, Patricia Belcher, Clark Gregg & Jennifer Hetrick

When you think romantic comedy, sadly it's awful one dimensional movies like *He's Just Not That Into You* and *Bride Wars* that come to mind, not the sweet and charming indie offerings like *Juno* and *Garden State*. Though they could all be construed as a rom-com, the sub-genre puts the indie films in a bad light by mere categorisation with the Hollywood productions.

After *(500) Days Of Summer* opens with the line "This is the story of boy meets girl, but this is not a love story," let's, for now, leave the detrimental genrification and instead focus on the film.

Based on the real life experiences of writers Scott Neustadter and Michael H. Weber, *(500) Days Of Summer* charts the once happy, but now failed, relationship between Tom (Gordon-Levitt) and Summer (Deschanel). By day, Tom is a greetings card copywriter, and by night, a hopeless romantic, harbouring the dreams and ideals of true

love, Summer, however, does not. Nevertheless, after Summer is hired as a secretary at Tom's office, the pair start dating, coexisting for 500 happy days, before they break-up. Breaking Tom's heart, he delves into their relationship, reliving every moment to try and figure out where it all went wrong, before trying to win her back.

Rooted in the present before jumping back and forth through the relationship to examine their time together, *(500) Days Of Summer* manages to coherently develop a story without feeling like the diary retelling of *Benjamin Button* or *The Notebook*, and so avoids feeling disjointed and incoherent. Despite the fact you always know where the relationship is going, ie. they break-up, not once does the narrative feel like it has a pre-defined ending, never lagging or falling into boredom.

Buoyed on by great performances in the central roles, *(500) Days Of*

Summer is the most charming film of the year to date and boasts the carefree and cheery attitude donned by the aforementioned *Juno* to such great success. Staying away from crude jokes, the film is very subtle in its comedic approach but before the closing credits roll, you'll still be near in tears with laughter on many occasions.

With such an honest script, deep-rooted in real life, it's very easy to relate to Tom and Summer, and more so, easy to fall in love with their story. The moment you leave the cinema, you'll want to be right back in there, seeing the entire movie again.

The fantastic soundtrack helps along the way, but even without, *(500) Days Of Summer* would capture the hearts of any film fan. Hopefully Neustadter and Weber have already got another project in the works.

★★★★★



LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT

RELEASED
Out now

DIRECTED BY Dennis Iliadis **STARRING** Garret Dillahunt, Riki Lindhome, Aaron Paul, Sara Paxton, Spencer Treak Clark, Tony Goldwyn & Joshua Cox

Inspiring a phenomenon in the late 1970s and 1980s, the original *Last House On The Left* is credited by many as being the first slasher film, paving the way for iconic horrors like *Friday The 13th* and *Halloween*. Indeed, for a film that had such an effect on the industry, and had become so notorious in parts of the world, banned in the UK and unclassified until 2003, some 30 years later, it is somewhat surprising only recently a Hollywood remake was commissioned.

Following a similar story to the original, *Last House On The Left* is about two teenage girls free for the summer in an isolated town. After driving out from the city with her parents, to their summer house in the countryside, Mari (Paxton) heads into town to meet up with friend Paige (McIsaac). Sitting on the till for a while at the store Paige works in, an innocent-looking adolescent Justin (Clark) invites them back to his motel to smoke some weed.

While Justin might be harmless, his father, however, is not. Broken out of police custody by his brother and girlfriend, Krug (Dillahunt) is on the front page of every newspaper in town as the state's most wanted man. Deciding it's too risky to let them go, Krug and co. kidnap the girls, using their car to get out of town before deciding what to do

next. Lost en route to the highway, Mari directs them in the wrong direction and towards her secluded family home, but after attempting to make a run for it, only leaves the kidnappers more angry as Mari and Paige's escape become one for their lives.

While the lead-in isn't as effective or believable, the story arc of *Last House On The Left* stands up to the original. As the intensity ramps up towards the breakneck second half, though society is now dumbed down to gore and violence, as Krug has his way with the hostages with very detrimental effects, the remake is equally as effective. While the film seems to take longer to reach the forest chases and revenge sequence in Mari's family home, when it does, it seems to run at twice the pace. Falling somewhere between several genres, *Last House On The Left* is a slasher film without much slashing (until right at the end when it comes in twice the dosage), a horror film without much horror and a revenge film with only one fight for revenge. But to be true to the 1972 classic, this would always be the case.

Built now more so on the idea the richer you are, the larger your plot of land and so further away from neighbours, and safety, one thing you might not have expected is the

stunning photography and shots crafted by director Dennis Iliadis. With the second act rooted in a forest by a vast lake, beautiful shots and very slick, sharply cut action streams give the film an art house feel at times. Though Iliadis' work may be a pleasure to watch, this new sheen takes away from the grim nature that made the original so great. Effects technology improves the blood and gore but the remake doesn't boast the edgy feel of the original, something a big budget was always going to condemn.

While Martha MacIsaac struggles to deliver more than a clichéd kidnapped teen, Sara Paxton is much better, showing a lot of promise for future roles. Similarly Garret Dillahunt is effortlessly calm and suave as escaped convict Krug, and fans of TV series *Breaking Bad* will get a kick out of seeing Aaron Paul, this time adding a harsh backbone to his usually bumbling character on TV.

Fun, certainly, but not as fantastic as the original, as remakes go, *Last House On The Left* is at least a decent addition to the 1972 film, and brings the iconic slasher to a whole new audience and providing more than a few nail biting moments along the way.

★★★★★



THE HANGOVER

DIRECTED BY Todd Phillips **STARRING** Bradley Cooper, Ed Helms, Zach Galifianakis, Justin Bartha, Heather Graham, Sasha Barrese & Rachael Harris

RELEASED
Out now

After Hollywood's last Las Vegas adventure with Cameron Diaz and Ashton Kutcher, seeing *The Hangover* on the horizon was a much needed tonic to help dispel the memory of *What Happens in Vegas*. And after successful early test screenings, buzz in the film industry was as high for *The Hangover* as it has been for any R-rated comedy in recent memory.

Driving up to Sin City for a bachelor party, *The Hangover* sees four friends party on the strip one last time before Doug's (Bartha) impending marriage, only when they wake up the next morning, their room is in a wreck and Doug is nowhere to be found.

If you liked *Dude, Where's My Car*, well this takes the same form; dude, where's the groom. The three re-

maining friends, including the awesomely awkward Alan (Galifianakis), retrace their steps as they try to find Doug, uncovering what was a riotous night in Vegas.

Though the script certainly isn't as funny as it should be, the cast do a good job to rouse a few laughs as Bradley Cooper takes first notable leading role and Ed Helms throws himself into the film with no abandon. It is Zach Galifianakis, however, that steals the show. He is hilarious whenever on screen as the quirky and more than a little bit weird, loner Alan, with great witty one liners and superb comic timing. He'll definitely be back for far more roles in the near future. Ken Jeong is also fantastic as a gay mob boss whom the friends owe a huge amount of money, though his role is a scant 5 minutes long.

Despite a solid cast the film never feels like it quite does enough. *The Hangover* is a lot safer, despite the R-rating, than some of director Todd Phillips previous films, and certainly could have benefited from a more daring script. Mike Tyson's cameo is a little strange and while the characters take a surprisingly pleasing arc through the film, *The Hangover* doesn't contain the constant rip-roaring laughs the likes of *Superbad* or some of *The Hangover*'s fellow Frat Packers' best.

Still, *The Hangover* is far from a failure, and there is still enough to find entertaining in the boys' struggle to remember just what happened the night before, and a great performance in the American box office proves it.

★★★★★



SUNSHINE CLEANING

RELEASED
Out now (USA)
June 26 (UK)

DIRECTED BY Christine Jeffs **STARRING** Amy Adams, Emily Blunt, Alan Arkin, Jason Spevack, Steve Zahn, Clifton Collins Jr. & Mary Lynn Rasjkub

Part-produced by Peter Saraf and Marc Turtletaub, two of the five strong team behind *Little Miss Sunshine*, it is obvious *Sunshine Cleaning* is targeting the same audience that was so captivated by the 2006 Oscar winner. Telling a similarly bittersweet tale, *Sunshine Cleaning* is another family affair, this time about two sisters struggling to find their purpose in life.

Struggling to scrape together enough money together to put her son through school, Rose (Adams) is rapidly losing patience with her low paid job as a maid. When a new client is a old classmate from school, only too willing to push her success down Rose's neck, the young mum decides enough is enough and throws in her pinafore.

On the search for a lucrative new business opportunity, Rose's married lover suggests she goes into the burgeoning industry of crime scene clean-up, and with the help of her

newly fired sister (Blunt), form *Sunshine Cleaning*, the latest team on the block.

For films so driven by their characters, it's hugely important the leading actors and actresses put in great performances, and *Sunshine Cleaning* certainly doesn't let you down in that respect. The film is honest unforgiving tale of the struggles, and joys, of modern daily life and while the entire cast is mesmerising, Amy Adams in particular stands out as the lead, for one of her best roles to date. Similarly you could not imagine anyone but Alan Arkin as Rose and sister Norah's father, providing a great on screen persona as he chases after endless get rich quick schemes.

Aside from the great actors on show, *Sunshine Cleaning* really proves so effective because the narrative is so utterly believable. The film feels like you could be watching the life of your next door neighbour,

always deep rooted in real life, and because of such honesty, you feel a real pull to the trials and tribulations of the characters.

Lacking perhaps a couple of scenes of emotional relief, *Sunshine Cleaning* holds undoubted parallels to poster attraction and the two of the film's producers' previous work *Little Miss Sunshine*, and though it isn't quite as good and probably won't be challenging for Oscars come 2010, is still a very accomplished piece of work by director Christine Jeffs.

The plot can lose focus at times but the film is still powerful, funny and effortlessly entertaining. Via a handful of hard-hitting moments you'll come out of *Sunshine Cleaning* with a smile on your face and a renewed thirst for life, after a very productive investment of an hour and a half of your time.

★★★★★

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June 26

ICE AGE 3

RELEASED
July 1



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RELEASED
July 5

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RELEASED
July 10

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RUDO & CURSI

DIRECTED BY Carlos Cuarón **STARRING** Gael García Bernal, Diego Luna, Jessica Mas, Guillermo Francella, Adriana Paz & Dolores Heredia

RELEASED
Out now (USA)
June 26 (UK)

Sports films have always been a troubled genre because so rarely can actors actually play sports. Bar Vinnie Jones, though his acting has never even gotten close to some of his breathtaking, or more over, leg-breaking, tackles for the Crazy Gang, most actors don't hold a split talent on the sports field, which makes recreating realistic action a challenging task.

Starring Gael García Bernal and Diego Luna as two brothers with a passion for the beautiful game, *Rudo And Cursi* attempt to break the mould. After being picked up by a top football agent to become stars in the Mexican league, Tato (Bernal) and Beto (Luna) leave behind their small rural township for life in the fast lane. With Tato soon becoming a goal scoring sensation and Beto closing in on the record for consecutive clean sheets, as their sporting careers kick-off, their

personal lives start to de-rail. While Tato pursues an ill-advised musical side project, Beto becomes addicted to gambling, before the stakes are raised so high in the final game of the season, only one brother can come out on top.

Though *Rudo And Cursi* struggles to blend the football and spin-off plot paths, it is a very accomplished debut from long time shorts director Carlos Cuarón. Good natured and honest, *Rudo And Cursi* soon absorbs the audience into the lives of two aspiring sportsmen and their failure to deal with the associated fame and fortune.

Critical to the success of the film, Gael García Bernal and Diego Luna share such great chemistry together, and for anyone who hasn't seen *Y Tu Mamá También*, it won't be a surprise to hear they have worked together before. Both give such

great performances as Luna at last loses his baby looks with a very matured delivery in his lines.

Further to the leading actors' credits, they are convincing on the football pitch. The sports action scenes are at times kept to a minimum until the final showdown, but when it takes centre stage in front of a heaving Mexican crowd, you can really picture Tato and Beto in the thick of the action, and not just as two actors pretending to play football.

Undone slightly by a predictable plot, ridden with clichés and a skipping narrative, *Rudo And Cursi* is a charming buddy movie that just about manages to get away with its flaws thanks to a spritely attitude and show stopping finish. And for once, some decent sport action.

★★★★★



VICKY CRISTINA BARCELONA

Return to form for Woody Allen as a group of traveling friends move in with a Spanish artist only for his ex to return and cause a complicated, and violent, love quadrangle.

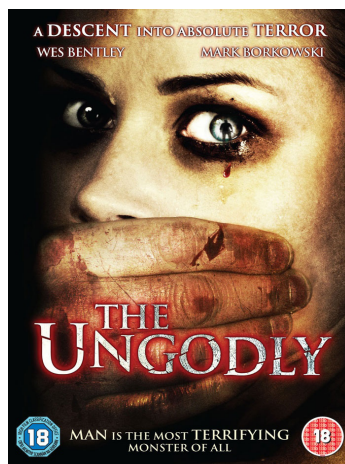
Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



STOIC

Taking time off from ruining much-loved video game franchises, director Uwe Boll attempt serious filmmaking as Stoic explores the events that led up to the suicide of a prison inmate.

Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



THE UNGODLY

Stuck between slasher movie and psychological thriller, as a cameraman captures a serial killer committing a murder before threatening to turn him in while still filming for a shocking documentary.

Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



MAX MANUS: MAN OF WAR

The story of one of WWII's most heroic characters, Norwegian Max Manus, and his efforts to sabotage Nazi Germany, as he struggles to control his Je-kyll and Hyde personality.

Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



GRAN TORINO

Striking drama about an aging war veteran who takes a young Hmong teenager under his wing to help him reform his life and end of torture of some local bullies. Simple but wholly effective.

Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



MARLEY & ME

Overly emotional tale as a dog both turns the life of a family upside down only for him to become as indispensable as anyone else under the family roof. Jennifer Aniston struggles though on the big screen.

Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



THE GOOD THE BAD THE WEIRD

Effortlessly fun rollercoaster ride as three men go in search of a hidden treasure after stumbling upon a mysterious map. Genre swapping director Kim Jee-woon does it again.

Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



PUSH

Slack superpower thriller that after Heroes' domination on TV, falls flat on its face. Set up as a possible trilogy, but after the superpowers lack imagination or explanation, Push isn't worth your time.

Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



To celebrate the release of the *Gran Torino* on DVD, we're giving you the chance to win one of 3 copies for yourself. To be in with a chance of winning, simply answer the following question:

Clint Eastwood won an Oscar in direction for his work on *Million Dollar Baby* and which other film?

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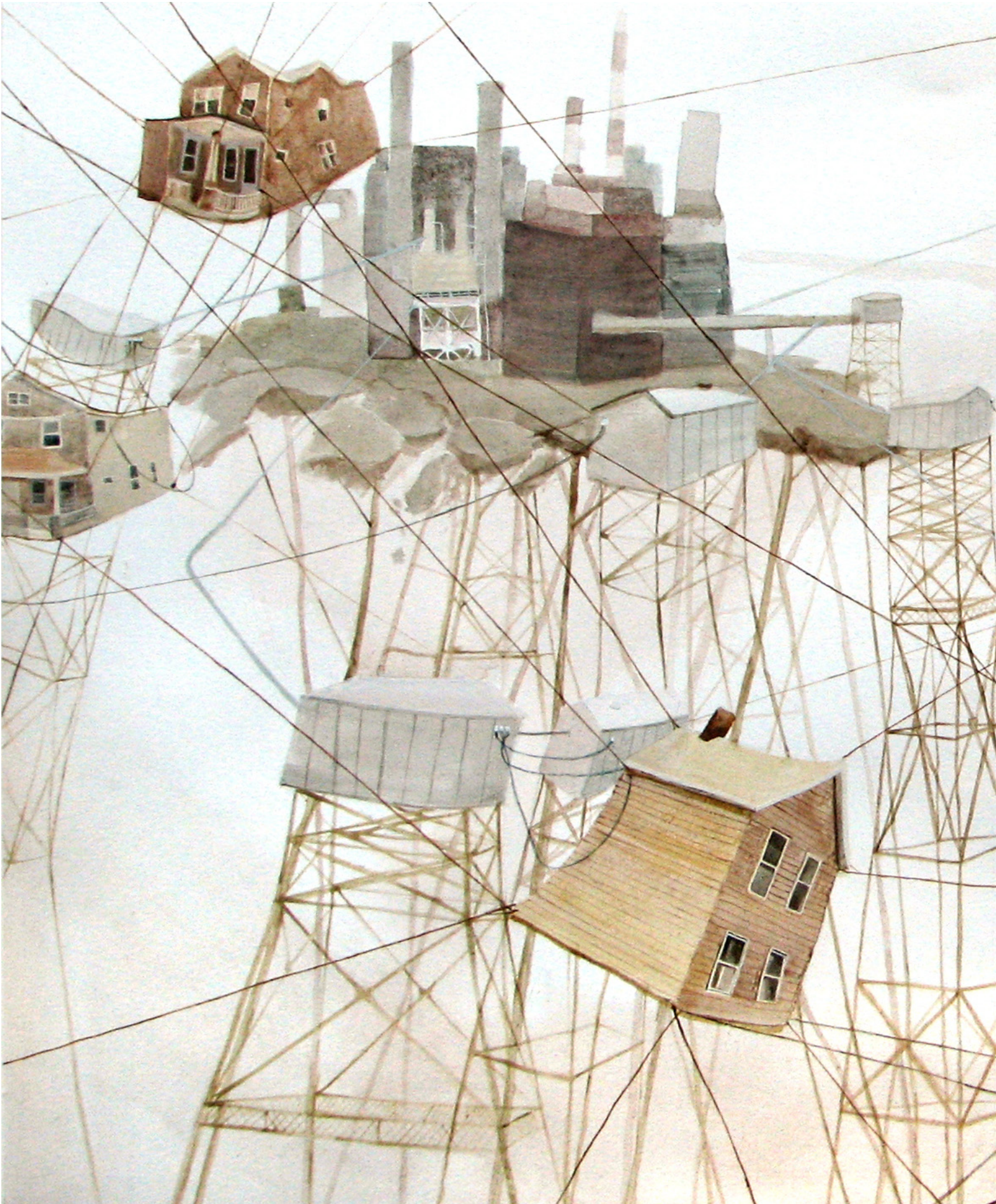






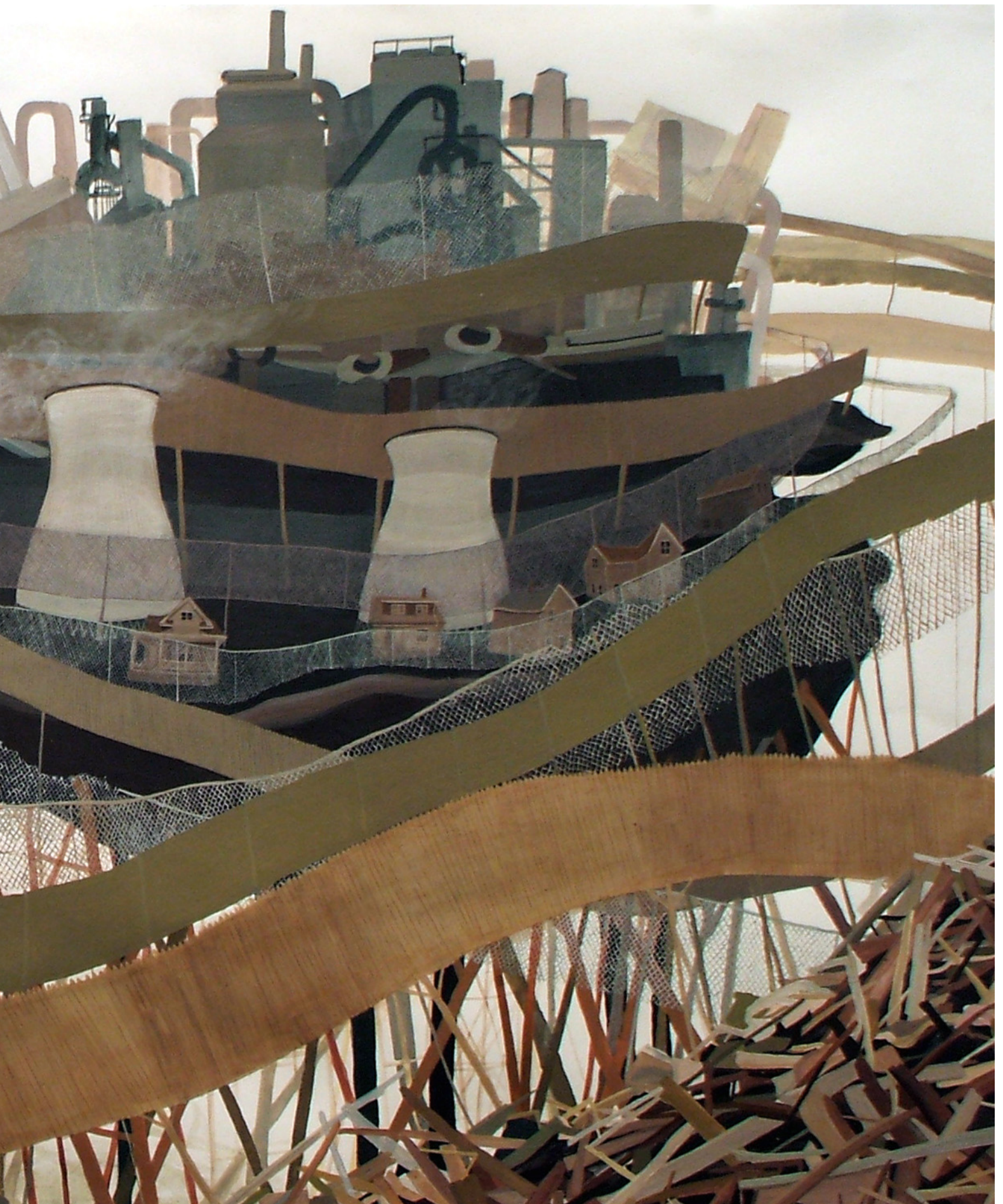


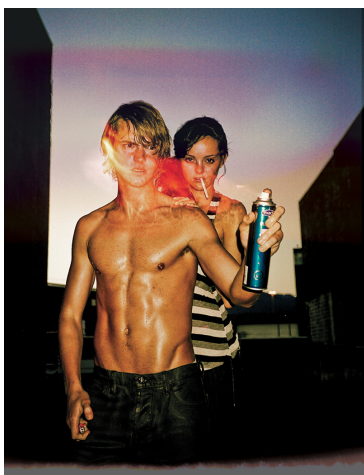
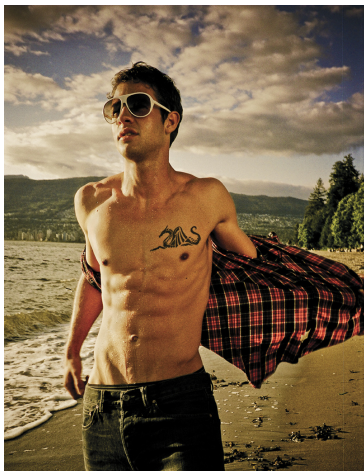












Summer Of Love



PHOTOGRAPHY **ANDRÉ PINCES**





A dramatic black and white photograph of a woman in a shower. She is holding a showerhead with both hands, and water is spraying all around her. The scene is captured in a way that makes the water droplets appear as a dense forest of light against a dark background. The woman's face is partially visible on the right side of the frame, looking upwards. The overall mood is sensual and powerful.

FIGHTING THE PUDDLE MONSTER

PHOTOGRAPHY **RENO RANGER**













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