

FAN THE FIRE

M A G A Z I N E

MUSIC // FILM // ART // STYLE // SEPTEMBER 2009

AVATAR

INSIDE JAMES CAMERON'S REVOLUTIONARY EPIC

PLUS

DELPHIC FEATURE

ARCTIC MONKEYS, THE CRIBS AND **VIVIAN GIRLS** ALBUM REVIEWS

FANTASTIC MR. FOX, KICK-ASS AND **TRIANGLE** PREVIEWS

(500) DAYS OF SUMMER FEATURE

INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS, ADVENTURELAND AND **THE HURT LOCKER** REVIEWS

ART BY **HYLTON WARBURTON** AND STYLE BY **HANNAH BACALLA**

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M A G A Z I N E



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“...the whole world has been talking about Avatar...”

After running a digital magazine, distributed for free across various platforms, for several years now, it's a strange feeling to see how our print counterparts are falling like flies. Reports this month suggest that staple British newspaper *The Independent* may be closer to closure than readers had first feared, while magazines similarly failing to adapt to the digital age.

I'm a huge fan of print journalism, and a regular reader of a number of publications, but their ineptitude to remodel their business endeavours, and a lack of foresight to the current media recession, only leaves you wondering how some magazines and newspapers made it to the great heights they once scaled. Never fear, however, we'll be here to bring you the latest film, music, art and style, free as always, and online whenever you want it.

This month the whole world has been talking about one film; *Avatar*. Bracing our cover after Fox hosted an unparalleled 'Avatar Day' run of preview footage screenings, James Cameron's game-changing epic is rightly causing a stir. We bring you the lowdown on what the screened scenes can tell us about the finished product and whether *Avatar* really will set us forth in a new age for the silver screen. We also preview the upcoming film adaptation of the iconic *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, sea-bound horror *Triangle* and ComicCon stand-out *Kick-Ass*. On the reviews side, it's a very busy month. We rule over *Inglourious Basterds*, *Funny People*, *Adventureland*, *The Hurt Locker*, *Mesrine: Public Enemy No. 1* plus a couple more. The real UK release you should be excited about this month, though, is *(500) Days Of Summer*, and after giving the film a perfect 5 stars a few weeks back, we uncover why Marc Webb's directorial debut is the saviour of all romantic comedies.

Delphic have taken over our stereo of late, so we thought it was about time to give the Manchester electro-pop-rock band some column inches. Aside the new bands, the tail end of August running into September also sees a number of indie favourites debut new records so we'll give you our verdict on new albums from *Arctic Monkeys*, *The Cribs*, *Jamie T* and *Juliette Lewis*. Plus there's our verdict after catching *Deep Sea Diver* in Chicago for a live show.

On the art front we feature the monstrous work of Hylton Warburton while for the fashion geeks out there, *Pawel Fabjanski* and *Hannah Bacalla* provide some devilish Autumn looks.

Enjoy the issue

Sam Bathe

CONTRIBUTOR OF THE MONTH



Living in Durban, South Africa, **Hylton Warburton** is an illustrator and designer attracting attention across the globe for his imaginative creations. Having lived in Durban his whole life, Hylton draws inspiration from the eclectic local and international creative community and stunning surroundings.

After studying graphic design at the Durban University of Technology, Hylton has worked on various projects, ranging from album art for international bands to illustrating children's books, retail advertising and painting and printmaking for exhibitions. His passion for art drives him to constantly push the boundaries of his illustration, looking for new ways to perfect his style and grow as an artist.

FIND MORE OF HYLTON WARBURTON'S WORK AT FLICKR.COM/HYLTONWARBURTON

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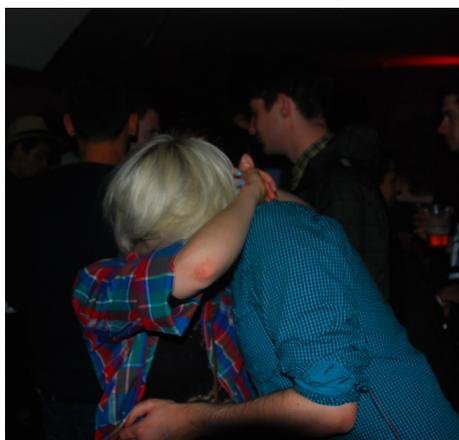


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■ SATURDAY, 11 JULY 2009

Robbers & Cowards

To celebrate the release of their new single 'I've Seen Enough', Long Beachers Cold War Kids have a novel new way of listening to the best track off their latest album.



Head over to Cold War Kids' [MTV](#) site for the chance to remix the track how you want. Swap in the four band members, or click the colour bars at the top of the page to change the instruments they play. Though to be honest, the classic version is the best, not that we didn't have fun playing around with the song.

Posted by Sam Bathe

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Lipstick Fever



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■ THURSDAY, 9 JULY 2009

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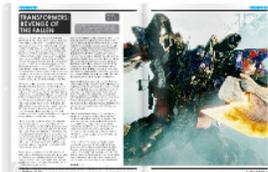
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FAN THE FIRE

MUSIC

Time To Get A New Perspective



For fans, the news of guitarist Ryan Ross and bassist Jon Walker leaving Panic! At The Disco because of musical differences was just as bad as a break-up. After their brilliant rock-synth debut 'A Fever You Can't Sweat Out' and more eclectic, folk-inspired follow-up 'Pretty. Odd.', the Las Vegas band have built up a remarkable fan base. For many, however, Ross was their favourite, so with him leaving, their loyalty was thrown up in the air.

Of course, Ross was to come back to music, and now alongside Walker, the pair have formed a new band, The Young Veins. With frontman Brendon Urie and highly talented drummer Spencer Smith continuing under the Panic! At The Disco name, undoubtedly, the next step for each band would be put under much scrutiny.

Far too much of a coincidence to ignore, both bands debuted new tracks on the same day. Part of the upcoming soundtrack for Megan Fox's new film Jennifer's Body, Panic! At The Disco moved back towards their high-paced, more rock style interjected with synth-ish 'ooooohs'. 'New Perspective' is infectious, full of life with shout-them-back lyrics. The Young Veins' first track was a lot closer to 'Pretty. Odd.', harbouring the same folk sensibilities, perhaps with a Beatles-y edge to it. There are flashes of genius but after a while the song grows tiresome and doesn't have the uplifting nature it needs. It's undoubtedly an early master, so Ross and Walker have nothing really to worry about, though former does need to bulk up his vocals a little.

Round one, then, goes to Panic! At The Disco, and we wait with baited breath what new albums will bring for the respective line-ups.

ART



ART



STYLE



STYLE



Shock Tactics

Giving a shot in the arm to a beleaguered indie music scene, electro outfit Delphic are gearing up for a breakthrough 2010

WORDS SAM BATHE

Every year there are a handful of aspiring young bands, hyped to produce great things with an album due out a couple of months later and sell-out tours already in place. Come next January, Delphic will be one of those bands.

After '80s electro infused this year's breakthrough act La Roux and Mystery Jets' critically acclaimed sophomore album 'Twenty One' 12 months ago, Delphic perhaps hold the strongest resemblance yet. Holing out of Manchester, their northern roots aren't the only thing Delphic share with the legendary New Order. Boasting an emphatic indie-rock/electro-pop sound, akin to Bloc Party's more electronic material and more significantly, the

"... to prove so cohesive despite the countless elements of their music, and yet still keep a simple elegance, is something special."

mentioned New Order, Delphic are the start of Nu Manchester.

The band were born out of another much-hyped outfit, Snowfight In The City Centre, but after growing bored of producing thoroughfare indie rock, James Cook (vocals), Matt Cocksedge (guitar) and Richard Boardman (multi-instrumentalist) teamed up with Dan Theman (drums) to form Delphic. One of the main objectives for the new project was to work without boundaries, and you can instantly feel aspirations in their music.

Live, they play without breaks, seamlessly blending one song into another with the energy and kinetic power you'd expect from a young band new on the scene. For an

electro-rock/dance music, however, to prove so cohesive despite the countless elements of their music, and yet still keep a simple elegance, is something special. And the music is all-important to Delphic, playing live in near pitch black, with strobe lights on their mic stands and the band's name emblazoned above an amp, so as to not detract and direct your attention onto the four as individuals.

Delphic's cultured hooks have already attracted an ever-rising fan base, and after showcasing their talents on the Manchester scene, it wasn't long before major labels were circling for their signature. In the end Polydor won out, and after setting them up on their own off-

shoot Chimeric, Delphic have got everything in place to make a real assault on the music world.

Touring with Phoenix, La Roux and opening for Bloc Party on their meteoric Olympia dates late last year it's no surprise hype started to build long before the four-piece even released a single. 'Counterpoint' was the band's debut release, alongside a remix on Kitsuné Maison vol. 7 and expect the likes of signature track 'Doubt' to follow later in the year with 'This Momentary' to hit shelves at the end of this month. There's no official word on the album just yet, but expect a release early 2010. And prepare to be amazed.

DELPHIC ARE CURRENTLY TOURING ACROSS THE UK AND JAPAN





ARCTIC MONKEYS 'HUMBUG'

RELEASED
Aug 24

Taking a break between albums to move in a slightly new direction, Arctic Monkeys turned to Queens Of The Stone Age frontman Josh Homme to part-produce their third LP 'Humbug'. Arctic Monkeys' new sound has much more of a psychedelic, hard rock edge, though compared with Homme's own project, 'Humbug' still feels like QOTSA-lite. The lyrics are as wonderful as ever, Alex Turner has always been a brilliant writer, but the instrumental side lacks bite and the signature riffs and hooks you'd expect from the Sheffield four-piece.

★★★★★

VIVIAN GIRLS 'EVERYTHING GOES WRONG'

RELEASED
Sept 8

Very much the female version of indie underground heroes Wavves, Vivian Girls' lo-fi rock backed up by a tonne of reverb, rampaging guitar and simple pounding drums is similarly opening doors for the New York trio. 'Everything Goes Wrong' is a step on from their self-titled debut and introduces more diversity and subtlety into their wide-ranging style. The reverb is toned down a little, at least on some tracks, and though not as catchy as Wavves or as easy to get into, if you can invest some time with Vivian Girls, you'll get a lot back.

★★★★★

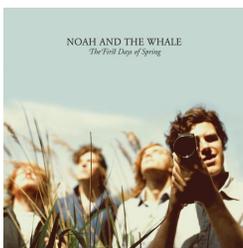
SIMIAN MOBILE DISCO 'TEMPORARY PLEASURE'

RELEASED
Out now

Building up an enviable reputation as much through producing as for their own debut record, Simian Mobile Disco return under an unprecedented wave of expectation. Sadly, 'Temporary Pleasure' isn't all it should be. Not as athenic as 'Attack Decay Sustain Release', this second LP doesn't get the rave going as you'd expect it to. 'Temporary Pleasure' can boast a great list of contributors though and '10,000 Horses Can't Be Wrong' and 'Audacity Of Huge' still have the depth of ambition to succeed.

★★★★★

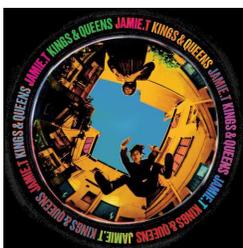
NOAH AND THE WHALE 'THE FIRST DAYS OF SPRING'

RELEASED
Aug 31

Single handedly bringing folk back into the indie scene with '5 Years Time' and 'Shape Of My Heart', never mind launching Laura Marling and Emmy The Great, Noah And The Whale have achieved a whole lot despite their youth. Including a self-produced film on a deluxe version of the LP, 'The First Days Of Spring' is more of the same, but that's a good thing. Noah And The Whale's sophomore record is a touching and beautiful creation, like a work of art not just collection of random tracks.

★★★★★

JAMIE T 'KINGS & QUEENS'

RELEASED
Sept 7

With his Mercury prize nominated debut album, Jamie T stormed onto the scene, blending ska and hip-hop with staple indie rock, and of course his signature south London accent. 'Kings & Queens' takes what he started onto the next level with an unremitting, power-punch sophomore record. From '368' to 'The Curious Sound', every track could be a single, such is the quality of Jamie T's sophomore effort, ranting and raving about rebellion, living in the city and, of course, the endless chase of girls.

★★★★★

THE BIG PINK 'A BRIEF HISTORY OF LOVE'

RELEASED
Sept 14

Already a big name on the lips of scenester kids, but yet to break the mainstream to the extent their quality demands, The Big Pink blend electro and rock for an interesting proposition. A big step on from their early self-titled LP, which was too heavy and uncontrolled, 'A Brief History Of Love' is more focussed, and a lot less painful on the ears in long doses. There are comparisons to The Enemy for their 'up and at 'em' style, but The Big Pink are far, far better than their Coventry counterparts.

★★★★★

JULIETTE LEWIS & THE NEW ROMANTIQUES 'TERRA INCOGNITA'

RELEASED
Aug 31

After ditching her old backing band The Licks, now boasting a refreshed line-up, Lewis' new album is a step on from the boring clash-rock of her previous records. Produced by Omar Rodriguez Lopez of The Mars Volta, a perfect fit, 'Terra Incognita' is much more experimental and atmospheric, and though this sounds like an LP upon which Lewis is finding her feet again after taking a new direction, there's plenty to be excited about for the band's future.

★★★★★

THE CRIBS 'IGNORE THE IGNORANT'

RELEASED
Sept 7

After their wonderful third LP 'Men's Needs, Women's Needs, Whatever', The Cribs have picked up a new member in The Smiths' Johnny Marr and you can feel the change on 'Ignore The Ignorant'. A continuation on from their last album, perhaps now a little fuller but keeping every sensibility The Cribs stand for, right through this fourth record, the lyrics mean something while the roving guitars power the Wakefield breakouts into true indie hall of famers. The Cribs didn't need a second guitarist, but it certainly hasn't hurt their music.

★★★★★

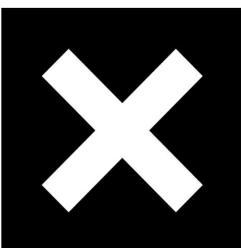
JET 'SHAKA ROCK'

RELEASED
Sept 7

After turning heads with 'Get Born', and most notably single 'Are You Gonna Be My Girl', second album 'Shine On' didn't do enough to push Jet where they wanted to be. 'Shaka Rock' is the record they hope will be their making, filled with powerful rock anthems, you can tell were written with the forethought of being sung back to them at festivals. Sadly there's not enough variety and while for the first few listens it's a fairly strong LP, 'Shaka Rock' struggles the third or fourth time around.

★★★☆☆

THE XX 'XX'

RELEASED
Out now

Advertising the album by sticking 'x' cut-outs all over the capital, The XX have created a real buzz for themselves from their understated south London beginnings. A calm, atmospheric album, full of spikey guitars, subtle vocal tones and minimal dub beats, 'XX' is a hugely refreshing offering. Different to anything out there at the moment and a remarkable achievement to self-produce an album of such great talent and awe-inspiring individuality, with their understated and haunting sound, it's no surprise they're the current talk of the town.

★★★★★





DEEP SEA DIVER

SCHUBAS, CHICAGO
17/07/09

Taking a short break from their tour with Conor Oberst and the Mystic Valley Band, Deep Sea Diver opened for Those Darlins when their own nationwide tour landed in Chicago. Providing a notable alternative to Pitchfork's festival offering of Jesus Lizard and Yo La Tengo, Deep Sea Diver put on a great show.

The collective name for Jessica Dobson's solo project, whom you can also catch as Beck's touring guitarist, Deep Sea Diver have a special way of engaging you with every track. With her soothing vocals and atmospheric guitar, each song off EP 'New Caves' lulls you into a wholeheartedly powerful and striking moment in front of the stage, reverberating long after leaving old Chicago tavern Schubas. Deep Sea Diver are far more than just a band to check out in the future, you should be listening to them now.

AVATAR

RELEASED
December 18

Arguably the most anticipated film of all time, and for its visual advances, certainly the most hyped, James Cameron's *Avatar* is at last, nearing release. Sitting on the idea for the film for 14 years, Cameron had been waiting for technology to catch up with his imagination, and with the production studio, *Avatar*'s filmmakers and early reports of footage talking up the game-changing photo-real CGI and next-generation 3D, perhaps Cameron's ambition vision has been put to the screen.

After releasing only a handful of details, never mind stills, from the film since the pre-production started a few years ago now, Cameron teased excited on-lookers with a handful of scenes at this year's ComicCon but the film only really made it into the public domain on August 20th, when a short teaser trailer debuted online. In the resulting 24 hours, the trailer was streaming a huge 4 million times from Apple's trailer website, a record by some margin, though the real preview event was to follow the next day. August 21st was dubbed 'Avatar Day' as Fox put on screenings across the world for excited fans, showcasing 15 minutes of the film, with scenes dotted around the first half; all to keep the hype-wagon rolling. It was an unprecedented move given negative feedback could have had a huge effect on the buzz for the film before the release, but on a whole, it seemed to pay off.

Tickets were given away online, with every screening 'selling out' in minutes in the UK, and a little longer in America after the *Avatar* website crashed repeatedly at the crucial moment. In the end some screenings were reported as barely filling half the seats but then for screenings on a weekday, such was to be expected. And at least now Cameron has been forced to

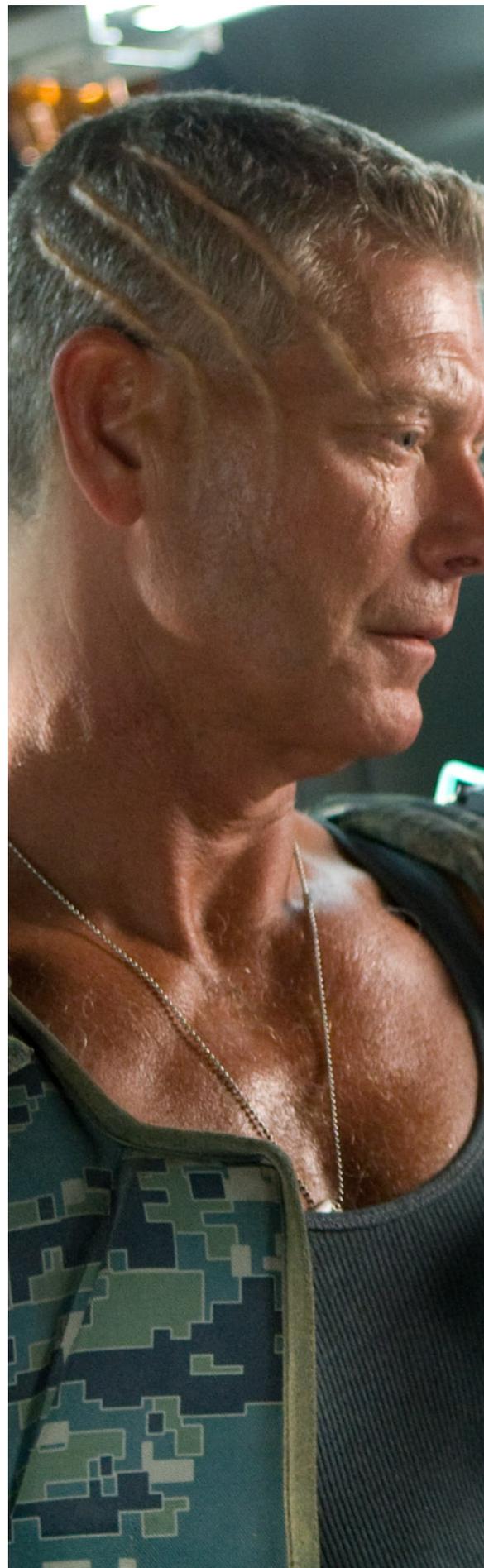
reveal some plot details from once secret script.

Set on stunning Pandora, humans have journeyed to the extraterrestrial moon to explore its uncharted forestry for valuable minerals and natural resources. Given Pandora's foreign atmosphere, however, humans cannot breathe on the surface without a would-be gas mask or outside a military mech-unit. Enter the *Avatar* program. To aid the exploration of Pandora, without the restriction of the human body, scientists have developed a way to control genetic hybrids of the indigenous Na'vi race, allowing them to forage unaided.

Keen to again experience life on his feet, former Marine Jake Sully, paralysed from the waist down after getting injured in combat on Earth, enrolls in the program, and after being shipped out to Pandora, takes control of an *Avatar*. After venturing out into the Pandora heartland with army orders, Jake meets a young Na'vi female, Neytiri, but after integrating himself into her clan, soon starts to fall in love with the damsel, and is left torn between his mission for humanity and protecting the Na'vi world he is now a part of.

Though sounding a tad clichéd, from such a visionary filmmaker with such power of thought behind the story-telling in his films, you can expect something beyond the ordinary for the plot of *Avatar*, with twists and turns a plenty along the way. Really *Avatar* Day was an expose of the visual flairs that have been so talked up as being the next forefront of the film industry.

As the Na'vi are entirely computer generated, plus much of the surrounding environment and forestry, Cameron developed a whole new motion capture technology that ➤➤









allows him to observe how what he is filming on a monitor with the virtual Pandora environment in the back-drop. Likened to a vast and hugely powerful video game engine, this allowed Cameron much greater control over his actors and observe how the atmosphere of scenes were shaping up before they went back into the studio for post-production.

Even more crucially for the Na'vi characters is another new technology Cameron developed just for Avatar. In the past, the biggest problem facing digital production of characters is the human face and accurately replicating facial movements. Cameron's new technology incorporated six times as many reference points than previous techniques, with a special camera mounted on an actor's head to capture movement. And the director's hard work has paid dividends.

The Na'vi look and feel completely real. Their expressions, movements and sheer ambience, plus of course their visual appearance, feels just as if Cameron has found a far off alien race and cast a whole bunch of them in his film.

Similarly the forestry looks breathtaking. Every bit as real as you'd expect, especially one scene aired where Jake is down by a river and the plants around him light up in natural luminescence. It's not quite photo real, but it's about as good as we've seen yet.

For anyone who's ever played a video game, however, Pandora's various creatures will feel like they've walked straight out of Panzer Dragoon, with a hint of Shadow Of The Colossus, in fact, the entire planet could be a cross between the two. This isn't a major issue, it just harms the believability, where as with something like Transformers, you think from the first minute, the robots

are from the very world we live in.

The other much talked about advancements were in Avatars 3D visuals, but sadly once more, the third dimension just couldn't cope. The extra effort for your eyes and mind still proved a problem, as it has with 99% of films before it, and the apparent mapping of the screen around your vision is too much to focus your eyes upon. Forced to flick between the fore and background, despite Cameron's excellent composition of each shot, for the predicted 2 hour plus running time, there's little doubt the unnatural feel to the 3D scope will prove a big distraction, and that's without worrying about the blurry action scenes.

For the moments where the Na'vi are blending into a real live action set, Avatar hits a few more problems. The Na'vi don't quite feel all there, much more like a CGI creation than when at home in the forestry.

With all the development in technology, CGI environment and engine creation, plus the actual filming, it's no surprise insiders are claiming Avatar will have cost a remarkable \$450m, with some predicting it'll breach half a billion by the time Cameron is through post-production. With a marketing budget still to be found on top of that, you have to give credit to Fox for backing such a project and keeping their nerve to resist withdrawing funding and cutting back the project.

Just after the remarkable District 9 was released in the States, however, when you compare what Neil Blomkamp did with \$30m, and how the alien race further feels more realistic than Cameron's \$450m Na'vi, you have to question in the end, whether it all will be worth it, and to answer that, we'll have to wait until Avatar at last hits cinemas late December. ■

FANTASTIC MR. FOX

RELEASED

October 23 (UK)
November 13 (USA)

Offering a completely different prospect to the last Roald Dahl adaptation, Tim Burton's gothic *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory* in 2005, *Fantastic Mr. Fox* is the next of Dahl's legendary novels to make it onto the big screen, and serves as 20th Century Fox's first foray into stop-motion animation.

Using the technique recently employed by *Coraline* and *Mary And Max*, *Fantastic Mr. Fox* comes under direction from the wilfully eclectic Wes Anderson and sees him reunited with long time collaborators Bill Murray and Owen Wilson. George Clooney, Jason Schwartzman, Willem Defoe, Adrien Brody and Meryl Streep complete a particularly star-studded voice cast aiming to bring this visual throwback right up to speed.

The animation incorporates an oddly distorted sense of scale with intriguing visual touches, however, in an attempt to implement a retro feel, comes across as cheap and utterly one dimensional. With characters that feel entirely un-human, *Robot Chicken* seems like more of a visual and tonal comparison, rather than the luscious puppetry *Fantastic Mr. Fox* might have been striving for.

Roald Dahl fans have been treated to stop-motion before, of course, in the form of Henry Selick's reasonably well received *James And The Giant Peach* but we'll just have to wait and see if *Fantastic Mr. Fox* reaches even that benchmark, nevermind matching the reputation still held by the much-loved author.





KICK-ASS

RELEASED
2010

Based on a new comic book series penned by Mark Millar, whose *Wanted* series was recently given an awful film adaptation, and illustrated by John Romita Jr., best known for extensive work with Marvel, *Kick-Ass* is the latest superhero offering from the graphic novel world. Yes, the bandwagon is still rolling, but stick with it, this time around, *Kick-Ass* is at least offering a slightly different take on the genre.

The film follows Dave Lizewski, an ordinary boy whose passion for comic books inspires him to turn himself into a real life superhero; Kick-Ass. British actor Aaron Johnson plays the titular hero and is supported by a varied cast that includes fellow Brit Mark Strong as well as Nicolas Cage and Christopher Mintz-Plasse.

For those of you that just read Nicolas Cage's name and immediately thought of *Ghost Rider*, his last comic book film appearance, try to remain calm; it's certain that *Kick-Ass* will sufficiently trump the aforementioned offering. In fact, after footage of the film debuted at this year's Comic-Con, *Kick-Ass* quickly became the talk of San Diego and worries of finding a distributor soon evaporated.

The self-referential tone of the story, which obviously lampoons genre staples, whilst not particularly new in itself, does promise an interesting take on the comic book phenomenon. Let's hope that *Kick-Ass* lives up to its title and provides some good humoured adventuring come next year.





TRIANGLE

RELEASEDOctober 16 (UK)
TBC (USA)

Far from setting the world alight with his last effort, the 2006 Danny Dyer vehicle and part of a semi-revival of the horror-comedy genre, *Severance*, *Triangle* sees director Christopher Smith ditch the laughs in favour of straight out scares. And devoid of the much-maligned Dyer, this looks like an intriguing prospect well worth your time.

The story follows a group of friends, most notably including Melissa George, who set out on a sailing trip together, only to be confronted by freak weather conditions and contemplate abandoning ship.

Considering themselves fortunate to find another vessel nearby, they're forced to board the mysterious craft, though on closer inspection, appears more ominous than they had expected, seemingly an abandoned ocean liner now operated by a gruesome gang.

In true horror fashion, the small group find themselves alone in a creaking, restricted environment where something has clearly gone very wrong. Smith seems to be aiming for a psychological edge to the frights, and the trailer raises some interesting questions. In an age when truly intelligent horror films are few and far between, let's hope that Smith can spin a good yarn and make the scares worthwhile so we don't end up with just another promising, relatively low-budget thrill ride that in the end, is just thrown on the now towering disappointment pile. Like his last effort.





A CLEVER ROOM

For years, mindless chick-flicks have given romantic-comedies a bad name, flooding theatres with the likes of *The Ugly Truth* and *P.S. I Love You*, but *(500) Days Of Summer* is single-handedly turning around the fortunes of an entire genre with invention, creativity and a heart of gold



STANTIN'
ANCE

WHEN (500) DAYS OF SUMMER scored five stars in advance of its American release, we didn't give it the perfect score lightly. Only the third film of the year we've given full marks this year, alongside In The Loop and this issue's The Hurt Locker, what's surprisingly is that (500) Days Of Summer is a romantic comedy.

When you think of rom-coms, your mind is automatically drawn to the bane of what has become a tired genre, chick-flicks. Predictable and chauvinistic films like He's Just Not That Into You and Katherine Heigl's atrocious The Ugly Truth struggle to portray anything like a realistic romance, with unrelatable characters and horribly clichéd plotlines.

Merely from a film's poster, never mind its trailer, you can instantly predict what will happen; unlucky in love girl meets boy, girl and boy don't realise they'd be perfect for each other, as the final credits close in girl and boy at last realise they've fallen for each other and the film ends with a kiss. It's a tried and tested method that has taken in hundreds of millions at the box office, but that doesn't mean they're adding anything to cinema, and more over, the lack of invention is aggravating even the hardcore target audience of twenty to thirty-something women.

THE RECENT BOMBARDMENT of chick-flicks, no doubt stemmed from the success of the handful of genre movies that also proved a critical success. The likes of While You Were Sleeping, When Harry Met Sally and Pretty Woman won fans around the world for their take on the girl meets boy love story, and studios noticed a gap in the market, which they exploited to nth degree.

It's no secret that since the 1990s spell of rom-com success, while the big releases have gone off the boil, indie cinema has taken up the slack. From Garden State to Juno and The Last Kiss, independent productions can dare to branch away from the staple money making formulas and dare to do something different, and that's what makes (500) Days Of Summer so special.

Much closer to the rom-com guidelines chick-flicks adhere to than the aforementioned Garden State and Juno, (500) Days certainly sits in a place whereby direction comparison with chick-flicks is more than qualified, and can be used to direct films in the failed sub-genre where they should have headed.

DOWN TO EARTH and believable, (500) Days is by no means a cutesy film and takes a cynical look at the clichés you'd expect from a rom-com. (500) Days uses the the signature plotlines differently, in a realistic way. Born out of reality, co-writer Scott Neustadter came to the idea for his debut screenplay after his own trials and tribulations in love.

Dumped out of the blue by a girl after two, what he thought were, exciting and promising months, the break-up hit him hard. Scott moved to London to 'study' and clear his mind then almost instantly after landing he met someone new. They dated for 6 months, then bang, again out of the blue he was found himself single once more, and (500) Days Of Summer was born.

Bored of the seemingly iron-cast romantic comedy guidelines, however, when Neustadter teamed up with friend Michael H. Weber, they wanted to do ➤➤







“(500) Days proves you don’t have to follow the usual rom-com plotlines to pull a few heartstrings.”

something different. Aiming to mix classic rom-com sensibilities with the exploration of *Memento*, their ideas spiraled onto the page leaving us with one of the most exciting and original screenplays in years.

(500) Days Of Summer jumps back and forth through Tom’s (Gordon-Levitt) life. Opening with the breakup with love of his life Summer Roberts (Deschanel), the film follows Tom as he darts through his memories of their 500 days together to try and pluck out where it all went wrong.

WHEREAS THE UGLY TRUTH pits a television producer and a hot property new presenter up against each other, (500) Days is rooted in reality. Tom is a greetings card copywriter, bored by the day to day monotony of his dead-end job. Tom longs for

excitement, for his architectural dreams to come true and to find the one. Summer is a receptionist, newly employed in his office, a love-cynic and the utterly intriguing girl every man will have met once or twice along their life. You can picture yourself in their shoes, stumbling along with life, far from that perfect place you and they wished to be in by now, and so (500) Days Of Summer hits home. In chick-flicks you long for their drama, in (500) Days you live every step with them.

Lovingly told by director Marc Webb, his feature debut boasts an innocent charm that really makes you fall for the film and its characters. Unlike the chick-flick ensemble, (500) Days feels honest and true, and despite jumping back and forth through Tom and Summer’s relationship, maintains a power you

perhaps wouldn’t expect.

Already tripling back its budget domestically through excellent word of mouth, (500) Days Of Summer is quickly becoming the saviour of romantic comedies. (500) Days proves you don’t have to follow the usual plotlines to pull a few heartstrings.

Chick-flicks should be looking towards Neustadter and Weber’s script as a guide to future films and audiences shouldn’t be forced to put up with the usual garbage, devoid of all imagination and affection, to satisfy their romantic tendencies. (500) Days Of Summer is a very big step in the right direction.

(500) DAYS OF SUMMER IS OUT NOW IN AMERICA AND RELEASED SEPTEMBER 2ND IN THE UK



To celebrate the cinematic release of the wonderful and effortlessly charming (500) Days Of Summer, we're giving you the chance to win one of three goodie bags, each including a t-shirt, copy of the soundtrack, (500) Days Of Summer styled headphones and a Punky Pins mixtape necklace. To be in with a chance of winning, simply answer the following question:

(500) Days Of Summer star Zoëy Deschanel teams up with musician M. Ward to form which indie folk band?

- A. She & Him
- B. Her & He
- C. Zoëy & Matthew

Email your answer to competitions@fanthefiremagazine.com. Deadline 11/09/09.



INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS

RELEASED
Out now

DIRECTED BY Quentin Tarantino **STARRING** Brad Pitt, Mélanie Laurent, Christoph Waltz, Eli Roth, Michael Fassbender, Diane Kruger, Til Schweiger, Omar Doom, B.J. Novak, Jacky Ido, Gedeon Burkhard, Daniel Brühl, August Diehl, Denis Menochet & Sylvester Groth

10 years in the making after starting to write the script for *Inglourious Basterds* back in the 1990s, fans and critics alike were billing Tarantino's WWII project as the cult director's masterpiece.

Following two converging stories, poles apart in Nazi-occupied France, *Inglourious Basterds* is a war drama much less focussed on the gunplay you might expect, instead exploring the lives living, and those forcibly lost, in the German tirades.

On one side of the resistance is Lt. Aldo Raine (Pitt), leader of a group of renegade Jewish-American soldiers, known as 'The Basterds', out to (literally) scalp as many Nazis as possible during their time across the pond. Meanwhile, fighting her own cause, Shosanna Dreyfus (Laurent) is seeking to avenge the murder of her family by devilish Nazi leader, known as the 'Jew Hunter'.

At almost two and a half hours long, for a war epic, *Inglourious Basterds* is pushing the boundaries of audiences' attention spans, but for Quentin Tarantino, this is a brisk running affair. Speaking of his time writing the script for *Inglourious Basterds*, he found himself suffering from the opposite of writer's block, and instead had far too many ideas to cram into one movie. For the first time ever, Tarantino reigned in his writing but 148 minutes is still a long feature to stomach, and there in lies two of the strongest and weakest points to the film.

Almost every scene feels extended, even doubled, from what you'd find in any other director's work. When used in the opening pivotal Nazi interrogation of a

farm owner suspected of harbouring Jews, or to intensify an undercover meeting in a pub, the long periods of dialogue and drawn out sequences create an effortlessly uncomfortable atmosphere and unremitting tension that at those points, fits the film perfectly.

On the reverse, when the situation doesn't call for that extra time, the long cuts only strive to emphasise the slow pacing of the film and you'll desire for *Inglourious Basterds* just to move on before boredom creeps in.

However, it isn't necessarily Tarantino's writing that's to blame for the cumbersome scenes, like it was for the forced entire extra film on *Kill Bill*; *Inglourious Basterds*' problems could have been rectified in the cutting room. After criticism of the film's length after screenings at Cannes, and the Weinstein Company's dire financial need for this movie to become a roaring box office success, rumours circulated that executive producers the Weinstains wanted Tarantino to cut a much shorter edit for theatrical release. Harvey Weinstein soon vehemently denied the stories but certainly with an outside eye ruling over some of the excessive sequences, the film could have been greatly improved.

Extra dialogue does though allow the opportunity for Tarantino to showcase his again brilliant writing. The film's dialogue is snappy and sharp, driving a lot of humour without the need for obvious jokes, making *Inglourious Basterds* arguably his funniest film to date.

With Brad Pitt in the ranks, you'd be right to expect a great per-

formance from him at least, though despite pulling off a somewhat ridiculous accent, it is Christoph Waltz that steals the show. As the aforementioned 'Jew Hunter', Nazi Col. Hans Landa is transformed into an electrifying and terrifying character. Waltz gives the Nazi an unerring sense of confidence and sincere belief that nothing will ever go wrong and that he will get the job done, without fail.

Inglourious Basterds, though, certainly has its flaws and the numerous chapter titles prove an unnecessary distraction to the already lagging narrative, still, after 10 years in the works, the film just about is worth the wait. As you'd expect, the film is very stylishly shot and with help from the wardrobe team from *Band Of Brothers*, feels right at home in WWII France. But *Inglourious Basterds* is not the classic war movie you might have expected. There is hardly any actual fighting and shootouts are few and far between, meaning aside from a handful of violent scenes, mostly involving scalping, this is more of a drama set in war times.

Despite some of the scenes dragging on too long, *Inglourious Basterds* is a lot of fun, altering history for the better as the Nazis feel the force of redemption. Some have said this is Tarantino's masterpiece but *Inglourious Basterds* is still certainly some way off *Pulp Fiction* and *Reservoir Dogs*, it is, however, much better than the misguided *Death Proof* and the self-absorbed *Kill Bill* meaning there's certainly enough on offer to please those beyond die-hard Tarantino fans.

★★★★★



ADVENTURELAND

DIRECTED BY Greg Mottola **STARRING** Jesse Eisenberg, Kristen Stewart, Martin Starr, Bill Hader, Kristen Wiig & Ryan Reynolds

RELEASED
Out now (USA)
September 11 (UK)

An alternate setting to that of a late 1980's American theme park couldn't possibly suit *Adventureland* any more perfectly than the rollercoasters and park games, quickly establishing the plight of our hero James (Eisenberg) in a world of seemingly typical characters thrown together in unique situations.

James is about to start his college career in exciting New York City, but first he has to earn some money to pay for it so goes in search of a summer job but with nothing of his CV, *Adventureland*, the local theme park in his small town, is the only work he can get. The park is filled with wierdos and recluses, except for one girl, who after smiling at James on his first day, soon makes him realise what really matters in life.

Eisenberg has his role down to a tee, able to play the dry, downbeat teen with perfect comic relief while Kristen Stewart plays the desirable Em, ever teasing inexperienced James with her sly but sexy demur. Sadly when the character calls for depth, however, Stewart struggles

a little, awkwardly looking to the bottom left to draw a tear. The quick versus slow repartee between is James and Em wholly relatable though for anyone who has ever been, or still is, an awkward teen.

Who really stands out is Martin Starr as Joel, one of the more seasoned *Adventureland* staff, who looks a little like a future James. Starr doesn't have enough screen time but when he is in front of the camera his acting subtleties say more than Eisenberg's dialogue ever could. Ryan Reynolds as the park's 'rock star' mechanic Connell also glows in all the usual ways. Unfortunately Kristen Wiig, who comically can do no wrong, is actually a low point in the movie, and it's easy to see Bill Hader's park manager would've been more effective as a solo act.

The whole cast really nails their archetypes though, from the uninvolved dad to the sexy, dumb girl or the annoying immature childhood friend, characters everyone knows and can pick out from their own lives. Add to this the keen

soundtrack of '80s pop and director Greg Mottola (of *Superbad* fame) point-on-point for all the right moments throughout the movie, and you have a grand film about the transition from a juvenile to finding yourself in life.

Mottola's camera is environment based, to make the theme park as big of an influence on the movie as possible, but he could have given us more from James' perspective instead of spreading the attention on everyone. Eisenberg does though, just about pull the role off.

The only mis-steps of *Adventureland* are that with such identifiable personalities, the movie is somewhat forgettable, and Mottola's attempts to fight this lead to a diluting of the story's realism. But *Adventureland* is an entertaining watch and hits all the right beats you would want before you request them from the actors and the production. Here's hoping it achieves a lot more timelessness than first may appear.

★★★★★



THE HURT LOCKER

DIRECTED BY Kathryn Bigelow **STARRING** Jeremy Renner, Anthony Mackie, Brian Geraghty, Guy Pearce & Ralph Fiennes

RELEASED
Out now (USA)
August 28 (UK)

Greeted with the opening message "war is a drug", *The Hurt Locker* attempts to delve deeper into the soldiers' psyche than most films before it. The film tails a three man bomb squad on the streets of Iraq, joined by a new, reckless team member, Staff Sergeant William James (Renner), after their long term technician (Pearce) is killed on the front line. For the remainder of the film, *The Hurt Locker* counts down the team's days in rotation, looking over their shoulder as they're thrown into increasingly dangerous and unreadable situations.

Despite the jumping narrative, *The Hurt Locker* is developed perfectly and doesn't feel at all disjointed. The dramatic sequences are hugely powerful and you're really thrown into the action, like the fourth member of the team as the bomb squad head out each day. Such is director Kathryn Bigelow's attention to detail, you could be forgiven for

thinking this was a documentary, a complement to the realism.

Not only the best film set in the Iraq war, *The Hurt Locker* is one of the very best war films in the last decade. The film is as much about the soldiers at work as it is about war and conflict in Iraq, and successfully portrays the trials of soldiers you never normally see in war films. *The Hurt Locker* doesn't rely on flashy gunfights to create excitement, instead Bigelow uses long cuts and stunning framing shots to portray the atmosphere, power and suspense of each situation.

Despite the intense personal nature and deep character development, it might take a couple of views to really tease the film's messages out of the plot but this is a minor problem from the sheer depth of *The Hurt Locker*. The film has a lot to say about war and the adrenaline rush of being on the front line before

delving into the lives of the bomb squad and the costs of heroism and irreparable psychological damage it can cause. Further to *The Hurt Locker*'s credit are the performances from the three leading men, in particular Jeremy Renner as the unflinching new bomb defusal expert. Renner gives a vastly powerful and visceral performance, so raw on the surface but driven by a deep mysterious personality.

One of the few must watches of the year so far, and certainly one of the most intelligent offerings, *The Hurt Locker* would likely already be boasting a masterpiece label had it been from a high profile director or studio. As it is, with the relatively unknown Bigelow behind *The Hurt Locker*, and a tiered release across America, it may take some time for the film to get the acknowledgement it deserves.

★★★★★



FUNNY PEOPLE

DIRECTED BY Judd Apatow **STARRING**
Adam Sandler, Seth Rogen, Leslie Mann,
Jonah Hill, Eric Bana & Jason Schwartzman

RELEASED
Out now (USA)
August 28 (UK)

Writer/director Judd Apatow called his new film *Funny People*, and the main characters are comedians, but is it funny? While the dialogue is hysterical and the situations comedic, it's actually quite dark.

The plot pretty much follows Adam Sandler's lead, George Simmons, for most of the movie. And Sandler is effortless in shadowing the pain of being a very successful comedian with no close friends to share it with. Enter Ira Wright (Rogen), who Simmons bumps into at a local comedy club. Simmons chooses Ira to be his new assistant and latches onto him when he gets some life changing news about his health. Ira, of course, jumps at the chance to further his career.

Unfortunately Rogen does nothing fresh with Ira, and it's pretty much the typical Seth Rogen formula, as effective as that is. Jonah Hill, playing Ira's flat mate and another hopeful comedian, falls into the same traps. Leslie Mann stars as

"the one that got away" for Simmons and is wonderful to watch on screen. The cameos throughout *Funny People* also shine, with RZA, Eric Bana, and new-face Aubry Plaza taking their bit-parts a tier above what's needed. Sandler also is great, slyly injecting darkness to Simmons with a sadistic touch all comedians should show. It's a disappointment that Simmons couldn't have gotten a little darker, as it seems both Apatow and Sandler were holding back a little on the horrors of reality. Sandler's casting, and his acting, also brings to light how much this movie mirrors real life, and extra quality that will make it maybe not funnier, but more fun on repeat watches.

The comparative to real life is extended with Apatow's new directing moves, stealing a few pages from the Wes Anderson book. The surreal camera angles for close-ups emphasise the soap opera qualities of *Funny People* and also highlight that Apatow knows exactly what

is going on in front of the camera and who the "funny people" really are. It's this kind of attention to detail that bring the fresh taste to Apatow's comedies; the mixture of sharp dialogue without being afraid of getting too real works well with a subject matter of this type.

The handling of the plot does get a little slippery in the third act, after two great sections in the differing worlds of successful and young professional comedians. In fact, closing a story with the right pacing has proven a problem in his two other directorial efforts, *Knocked Up* and *The 40 Year Old Virgin*.

The dialogue and themes of the movie are strong the whole way through and you won't waste your time if you're looking for the good jokes or even something more. *Funny People* is a very decent movie and has a little bite in its bark for everybody.

★★★★☆



G.I. JOE: RISE OF COBRA

RELEASED
Out now

DIRECTED BY Stephen Sommers **STARRING** Channing Tatum, Marlon Wayans, Christopher Eccleston, Sienna Miller, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje, Byung-hun Lee, Dennis Quaid, Ray Park, Saïd Taghmaoui, Grégory Fitoussi, Rachel Nichols, Jonathan Pryce

Based on the iconic American action figures, unlike the debut of Paramount's other collaboration with toy manufacturer Hasbro for Transformers, G.I. Joe has been greeted by waves of bad buzz and unforgiving reactions from early test screenings. With specialist Stephen Sommers at the helm, however, this action-thriller was always deserving of a chance, and might yet, not ruin the name of the legendary toys.

Set in the near future, G.I. Joe: Rise Of Cobra follows the US army's covert special forces team, in charge with stopping terrorist forces across the world. With the help of mechanical suits and futuristic weaponry, and joined by two of the regular army's leading soldiers, when a group known only as Cobra attempt to steal nanomite-powered warheads to wreak havoc across the planet, the Joes know they're about to face their biggest test yet.

G.I. Joe was always going to be on the fantasy side of action-thrillers, but based around the generic two conflicting teams, at times it feel like a spoof. Packed with the clichés that fill similar films, only here struggling to portray them seriously, G.I. Joe feels alarmingly close to Team America: World Police. The big dif-

ference; Team America was meant to be satirical, G.I. Joe is not.

A lot of the film is far-fetched, even given the fantasy element, which is a problem with the script not the premise. Brendan Fraser makes an ill-advised cameo and Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje's awful English accent further condemns the tone. But for a film so heavily reliant on computer graphics, the biggest disappointment is the below par CGI. Most of the set-piece effects look good, like the collapsing Eiffel tower you'll also see in the trailer, but the backdrops, futuristic planes and development shots feel akin to B-level video game cut-scenes, nowhere near the visual realism of something like Transformers.

One thing you should always expect from action-thrillers is a fun popcorn experience, and here G.I. Joe just about manages to convert. Stephen Sommers' direction, however, lacks focus and the film stutters as it attempts to explore the convoluted plot, breaking up the intensity. Where Sommers comes into his own is during the action sequences. All of the Joes feel like they have a purpose and a use, not just in the film for one specific scene to aid the lead, Duke (Tatum).

As you might expect, G.I. Joe suffers from its fair share of over the top performances. Dennis Quaid, as General Hawk, once again makes you question why he's a name in Hollywood while Joes Channing Tatum (Duke) and Marlon Wayans (Ripcord) tick the action star boxes without trying anything new. The surprise performances comes by the way of Sienna Miller. The beleaguered actress pulls off devilish siren the Baroness with a suave sophistication and confident aggression.

G.I. Joe: Rise Of Cobra is a very throwaway experience, likely to be forgotten by the film world very quickly. If you've got a free evening, though, it certainly offers fun in spades, though you'll have to look beyond the countless frustrations along the way.

Paramount certainly had a sequel and likely trilogy in mind when making the film, and G.I. Joe aptly introduces a raft of characters it could be exciting to develop in films to come, but given a reported \$175m budget and further \$150m spent on promotion, whether it'll make that back could well decide plans down the line.

★★★☆☆

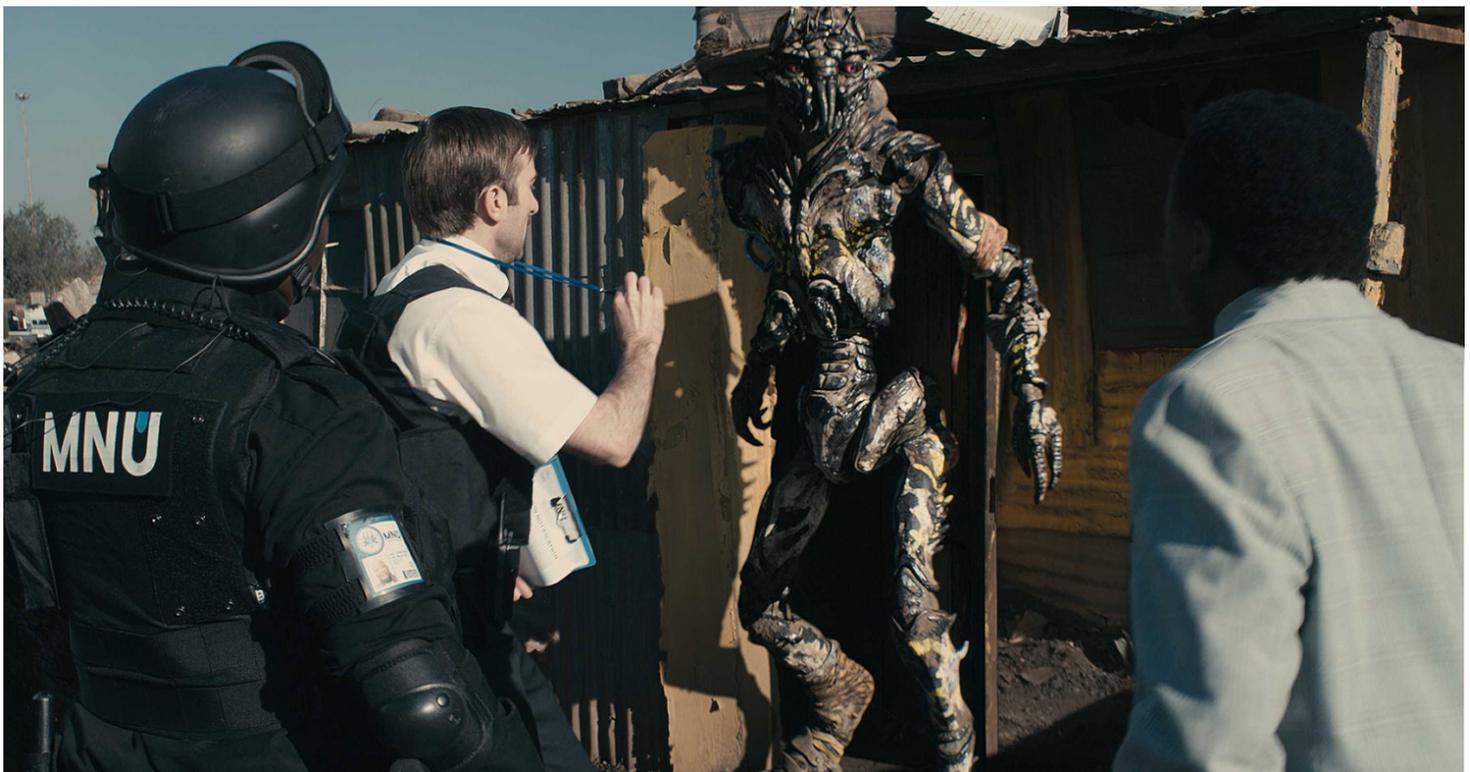
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THE FINAL DESTINATION

RELEASED
Aug 28

GAMER

RELEASED
Sept 4



DISTRICT 9

RELEASED
Sept 4

**CLOUDY WITH A CHANCE
OF MEATBALLS**

RELEASED
Sept 18

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ALIENS IN THE ATTIC

DIRECTED BY John Schultz **STARRING**
Carter Jenkins, Austin Robert Butler, Ashley
Tisdale, Robert Hoffman & Kevin Nealon

RELEASED
Out now

If aliens were to ever attack earth, it would probably be with a billion strong army and countless monstrous death ships, but then that wouldn't make for a great family adventure film. In *Aliens In The Attic*, everything's a little more Disney.

Touching down on earth during what everyone thinks to be a meteor shower, when the satellite TV is out the next morning, it's not a storm, but a crash landed alien spacecraft that's to blame. With nothing on the box, the Pearson family send son Tom (Jenkins) up to the roof to investigate but rather than a wonky receiver, he finds four knee high aliens and an urge to take over his planet. For the next 80 minutes a battle ensues between the Pearson family and the aliens, whom to conquer earth must first defeat the vacationers, only after the extra terrestrials' high tech weaponry allows them to take control of adult humans, it's up to the

kids to step up their game.

You might expect a silly, family crash-bang adventure, and you wouldn't be too wrong, but *Aliens In The Attic* is also a lot more fun than you might presume, and even with *High School Musical*'s Ashley Tisdale (Bethany) in tow, not nearly as aggravating.

In fact, poster girl Tisdale, the biggest young actor in the film, isn't on screen for all that long, instead Carter Jenkins, Austin Butler, Ashley Boettcher and the Young twins lead the charge with their reckless abandon just a little reigned in to keep their performances in check.

Though not a lot happens in terms of plot development, the screenplay is full of life and boasts fast paced action that will keep kids entertained. Carter Jenkins' character Tom provides the only real emotional element, discovering as

the film progresses, that it's OK to be yourself and not back away from your brain power.

At times still a little too reliant on slapstick humour, Robert Hoffman provides most of the comedy relief. As Bethany's older boyfriend, Hoffman's character is soon implanted with the device that allows the aliens to control humans, all to much amusement, especially when Tom gets his hands on the control pad.

Aliens In The Attic might fall between key audiences but will certainly provide a rip-roaring time for both tweens and younger kids, never mind the parents who are seemingly dragged along. *Aliens In The Attic* is likely to become a guilty pleasure in years to come, sure, not very original in its premise, but it's harmless fun the whole family can enjoy.

★★★★★



MESRINE: PUBLIC ENEMY NO. 1

RELEASED
August 28 (UK)
TBC (USA)

DIRECTED BY Jean-François Richet **STARRING** Vincent Cassel, Ludivine Sagnier, Mathieu Amalric, Gérard Lanvin, Samuel Le Bihan, Olivier Gourmet, Michel Duchaussoy, Myriam Boyer, Anne Consigny, Georges Wilson, Alain Fromager, Alain Doutey, Laure Marsac, Arsène Mosca

The second of a two-parter about the life of French criminal Jacques Mesrine (Cassel), *Public Enemy No. 1* follows the famed felon during his days under the radar of the local police and explores his growing public identity.

The thrust of the story picks up a few years after part 1, *Killer Instinct*, back in France with Mesrine again robbing banks and blasting his way out of trouble with more luck than anything else. Even when the police do at last capture Mesrine and he's locked up behind bars, he soon breaks out, causing mayhem once more. It's at this point when he's given the titular *Public Enemy No. 1* tag, a title Mesrine soon grows proud of, and takes offence with anyone who tarnishes his name, but with the added police attention that comes with it, perhaps, instead he should worry about staying out of their hands.

While you'll be able to get by without seeing *Killer Instinct*, there's no doubt you'll get more out of *Public Enemy No. 1* if you have seen the first film. The plot is rounded, and doesn't feel like it's picking up half way through the story, instead *Public Enemy No. 1* takes on another part of Mesrine's life, though there are several references to the events in *Killer Instinct* that will pass you by if you haven't seen it.

Again Vincent Cassel steals the show with a commanding performance. There has been lots of talk that this is his *Raging Bull* with Cassel piling on the pounds to play a filled out, older Mesrine, and though his performance can't really be compared to that of De Niro, Cassel still boasts a real on-screen presence.

Great chemistry between Cassel and Mathieu Amalric, who plays accomplice Francois Besse, helps

back up a very accomplished ensemble cast.

Though *Public Enemy No. 1* isn't quite as exciting as *Killer Instinct*, taking more of a dramatic tone, as opposed to the thriller aspirations of the first, it's still a very enjoyable experience, and a pleasure to round off the fascinating story of Jacques Mesrine's life. The extra character work pays off, delving deeper into the psyche of one of France's most famous criminals as director Jean-François Richet again shoots with great style and cinematography.

If you can find a cinema showing the two films back-to-back, jump at the chance to catch Mesrine parts 1 and 2, but even if not, and you haven't seen *Killer Instinct*, *Public Enemy No. 1* is still worth the investment of an afternoon.

★★★★★



ADAM

DIRECTED BY Max Mayer **STARRING** Hugh Dancy, Rose Byrne, Peter Gallagher, Amy Irving & Frankie Faison

RELEASED
Out now

After starring opposite Isla Fisher in *Confessions Of A Shopoholic*, you'd be forgiven for worry whether Hugh Dancy was about to throw away his serious acting career to spend the rest of his days as the charming male romantic lead in countless chick-flicks, as so many other exciting talents have done. But filmed way back in late 2005, *Adam* was the trump card in Dancy's back pocket, just waiting for a distributor to unveil. Praised across the board after its premiere at this year's Sundance, there were early fears *Adam* would struggle to find a backer but soon enough Fox Searchlight stepped into the breach meaning over 4 years since work began on the film, it's at last making it into theatres.

About titular character *Adam* (Dancy), writer-director Max Mayer's first film in ten years explores his day to day life living with the socially restrictive Asperger's syndrome. *Adam* finds it difficult to integrate into society, and in particular, understand and communicate with individuals. That all starts to change when Beth

(Byrne) moves into the apartment above. *Adam* seeking to dispel his loneliness and Beth intrigued by *Adam*'s passion and good nature, the pair form an unlikely bond before twists and turns lead the relationship down a path you wouldn't necessarily expect.

Given Dancy's last outing, you could be forgiven for walking into *Adam* waiting for it to fall down the traditional rom-com plotlines but this is more of a rom-heartbreaker than anything else. The plot attempts to move away from the stereotypes that are blighting often promising romantic movies.

The film's major strongpoint though, is undoubtedly the performance by Hugh Dancy. In a breathtaking turn as the troubled but ever hopeful *Adam*, Dancy really proves his credentials, portraying the struggles and frustrations of his socially restricted character with great confidence and even greater believability. Hopefully this is the film to really push Dancy onto more high profile and challenging work.

Rose Byrne also must not be forgotten and she gives an equally adept performance ensuring the film isn't too one-note, developing Beth's compromises when building a relationship with *Adam*.

Though *Adam* isn't always an easy watch, but then that was to be expected when exploring a social disorder, it is, however, a sweet, honest and charming film that manages to create a real pull for both *Adam* and Beth. *Adam*'s affliction isn't used as a gimmick, and though some of his actions will draw laughs, it is down to his endless enthusiasm; he's always in on the joke, there's never a laugh at his disorder.

Another thoroughly engaging release from Fox Searchlight, the studio's indie side-arm is rapidly becoming the saviour of an otherwise grossly mis-managed company. *Adam* is a film that will win over your heart and open your eyes to living a life with Asperger's and the acting talents of Hugh Dancy.

★★★★★



To celebrate the release of the hilarious and witty *In The Loop* on DVD, we're giving you the chance to win one of three copies for yourself. To be in with a chance of winning, simply answer the following question:

In The Loop is a spin-off of which satirical BBC TV series?

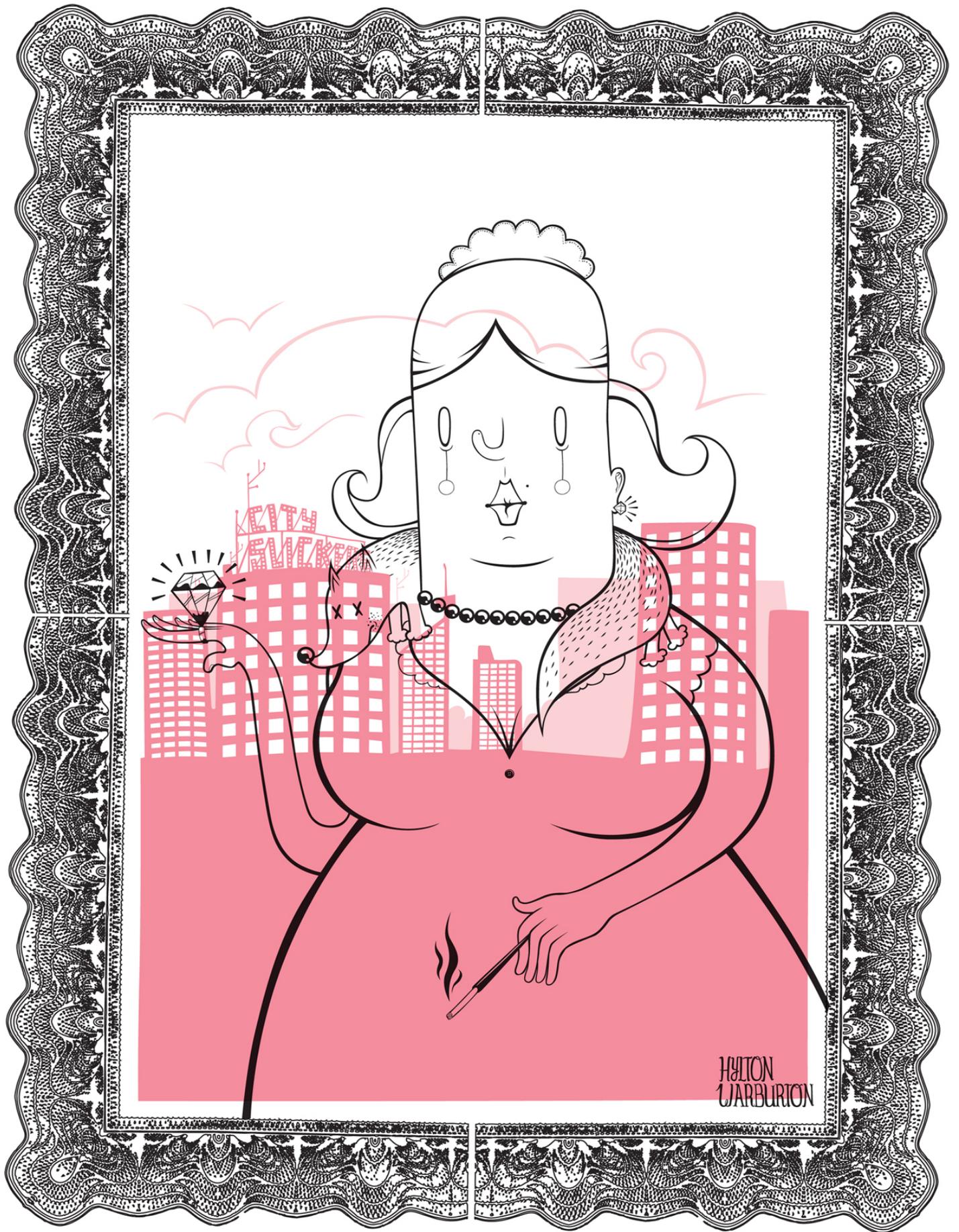
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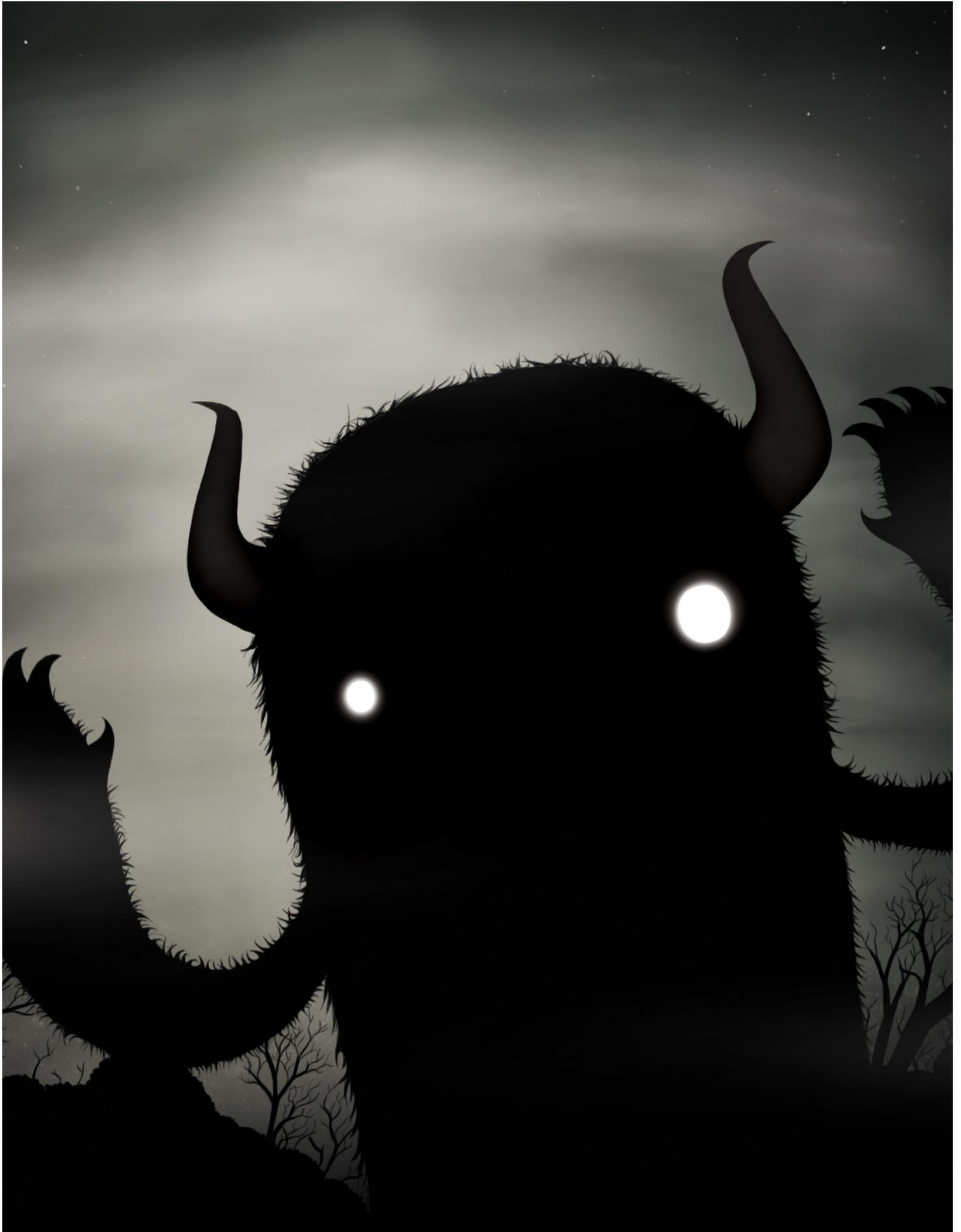


Monster Hunter











STYLE

TOUCHING THE
VOID

PHOTOGRAPHY PAWEL FABJANSKI















STYLE

A TALE OF
ONE SISTER







STYLE





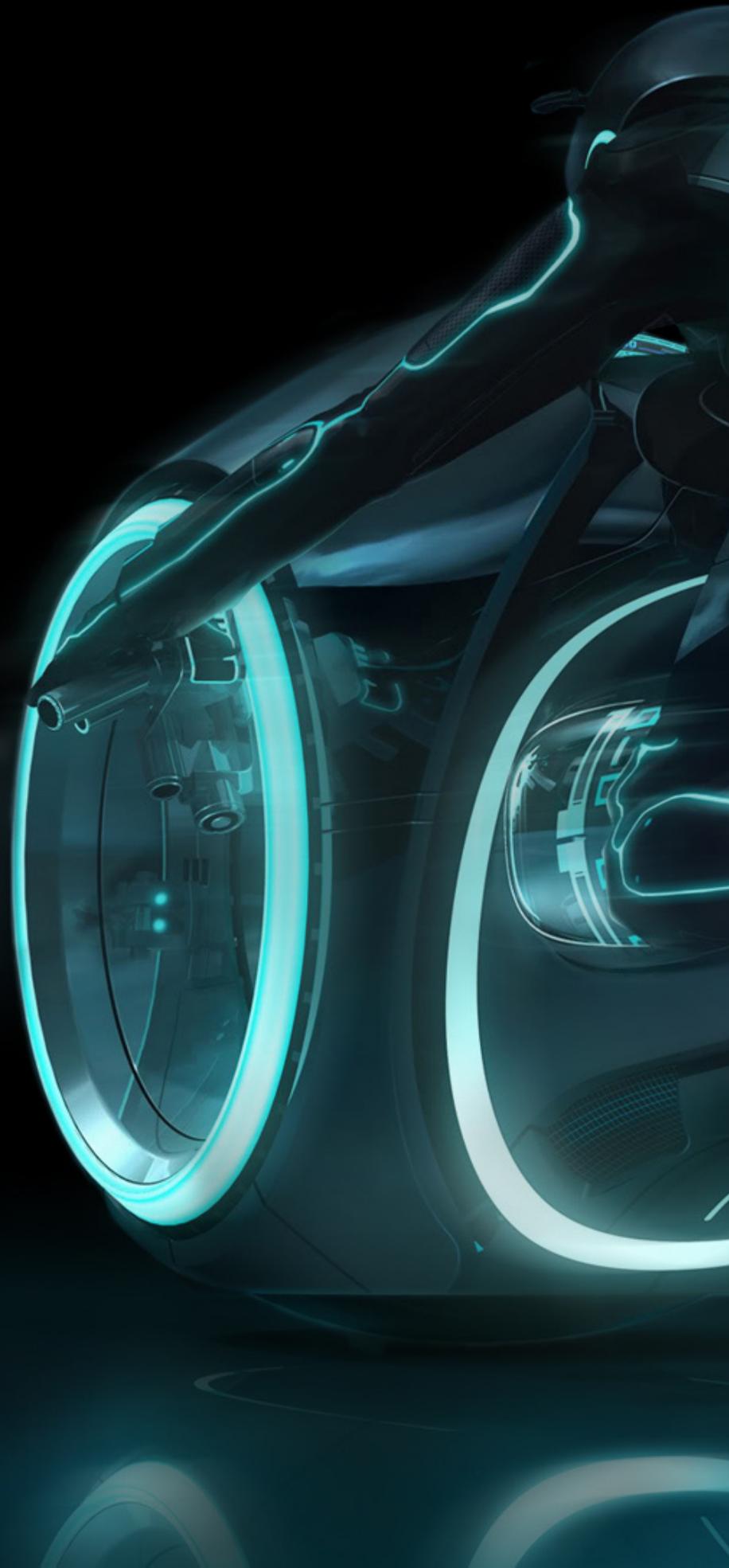








NEXT MONTH... ONLINE SEPTEMBER 25TH







FAN THE FIRE #24 ■