



One of the last major film festivals of the year, this month, London was overcome with filmmaking talent. Giving premieres to the likes of Fantastic Mr. Fox, Nowhere Boy and A Single Man, the 53rd annual BFI London Film Festival was quite the spectacle, and film suitably takes centre stage this issue. As Hollywood continues to disregard all integrity with blockbusters like 2012 (given a scathing 1 star review on pg. 42), sure they make their money back, but there's nothing stopping the big studios from instilling a better script and some creative forces in the production. Artistic integrity doesn't mean box office failure, The Dark Knight is a prime example, and when a great script, which not even writer/director Roland Emmerich could argue is on show in 2012, is put to the screen by a visually interesting and talented filmmaker, such as Chris Nolan or numerous other individuals out there crying out for a chance on a studio picture, the results can be remarkable. The Box is that film. Public opinion has been split, unsurprising given the film was marketing in America as a Cameron Diaz movie rather than an inventive release from the director of Donnie Darko, but given the chance on a studio film, Richard Kelly made an interesting piece, more expansive and innovative than 2012 could ever dream of.

Aside the aforementioned films, in our London Film Festival round-up we also bring you reviews of Up In The Air, the riotously funny Bad Lieutenant: Port Of Call New Orleans and The Road, plus a raft of smaller projects hopeful of finding a distributor for a cinematic release in 2010. Likely the last from now shut-down boutique label Paramount Vantage, you'll also find Carriers in our review section, and the new film from Gerard Butler, Law Abiding Citizen, which should put memories of The Ugly Truth to bed with the Scottish actor starring as good guy gone bad as he seeks retribution against the corrupt legal system. Though it has been out for a while now in the States, Steven Soderbergh's The Girlfriend Experience eventually lands in the UK come December, and while porn star-turned-actress Sasha Grey was in town for the premiere, we sat down for chat with the lady dubbed 'the dirtiest girl in the world'.

Set to break in 2010, Dawes have been tirelessly touring and building reasonable fan base for the last year across America. With their album 'North Hills' gaining critical acclaim, their only problem has been getting it into enough ears, but now on the cuff of something major, the new year will almost certainly bear fruit for the Californian band. We get to grips with their history on the Malibu beaches before heading inland to North Hills and a folk rock sound. Coast-to-coast, Surfer Blood are from Florida and another example of the resurgent surf rock scene. Recently wowing crowds at New York's CMJ festival, don't be surprised if Surfer Blood are this year's Wavves at legendary proving ground SXSW come March. We reveal why you'll be hearing a lot more from them in the coming months.

In our art section, Brandon Schaefer shows how it's done when it comes to poster design. There's no doubt studios have taken it up a notch on their effort, but when you put them alongside Brandon's work, there really is no competition. First featuring her stunning paintings a couple of years ago, you might not have seen the breathtaking colour in Françoise Nielly's art before now, but afterwards, you'll be eagerly awaiting new pieces. Stéfan Le Dû rounds the art features, and similar to our recent dialy Danbo diary photospread, Stéfan follows the life of two Stormtroopers exploring earth in search of the rebel scum.

Once again on the cover, our style spreads are becoming more and more influential. Ruud Baan borrowed a bike from Studio RAAR, and with a sleek wardrobe in tow, puts together a great winter look, though you might have to throw on a jacket if you live in the colder parts of the world. Back for a second time, Anoush Abrar and Aimée Hoving provide the most glamorous satellite dish maintenance you'll see in a long time, parading the rooftops in a highly sophisticated style. Lastly, Igor Termenon recalls a classic French era, and making you yearn for the summer months under the gaze of the glaring sunlight, lounges by the pool to forget about the onset of winter. Enjoy the issue.

Sam Bathe

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## Igor Termenon PHOTOGRAPHER

Currently based in Gijón, a town in the north of Spain, 24-year-old Igor Termenon only became interested in fashion photography around three years ago.

Igor's work has been published in several online magazines and websites after producing shoots that far outstrip his limited experience, learning the trade in his own time while studying mechanical engineering. Now in his final year of education, unsurprisingly Igor plans to keep on taking photos when he's finished his degree.

Igor's main inspiration is music, that's where he gets most of his ideas from, though his work is similarly influenced by his fascination with natural light. Unsurprisingly sun light has therefore become one of the most recognisable features of his work.

Igor's personal work can be found on his blog at: therainwillremain.blogspot. com

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# Nick Deigman writer

Graduating from Queen Mary, University of London, in 2007 after three years reading Film Studies, Nick decided to dedicate his life to the film industry, in the hope that it would some day return his warmth.

This tumultuous journey into the bosom of the entertainment industry has seen him running for Partizan Ltd and Pulse Films; reading scripts for Celador, Working Title and Recorded Picture Company; working as a script editor for independent filmmakers; and crawling around every production company in London begging for work on a regular basis.

In the course of his fraught assault on the well-guarded fortress of British media, Nick almost accidentally became adept at watching films and critiquing their strengths and weaknesses. He therefore diverts as much time as possible to the altruistic task of sifting through weekly release schedules to pick out the best of the celluloid litter each month.

As well as his contributions to Fan the Fire you can also read Nich's reviews of older films from the canons of world cinema at: t5m.com/nicholas-deigman

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# Françoise Nielly ARTIST

Françoise Nielly lives in a world of images, exploring its many facets all her life through painting, photography, roughs, illustrations and computer-generated graphics, but it's now clear that painting is her direction and her passion.

She gets her sense of space and construction from her father, who was an architect. Growing up in the South of France where she lived between Cannes and Saint-Tropez, Françoise was never far from the sense of light and colour that permeates the atmosphere of the surrounding environment.

Françoise Nielly's paintings are expressive, exhibiting a brute force and fascinating vital energy. Oil and knife combine to sculpt her images and whether she paints the human body or portraits, Françoise takes a risks; her paintings are sensual, her colours exuberant, even explosive, and her color palette dazzling.

Françoise Nielly is a passionate woman who loves life, wide open spaces, sushi, blue lagoons, the internet, humor, books, Paris, New-York and Vancouver. She lives and paints in Paris, near Montmartre, and shows and sells her work in Europe, Canada and the United States. Find more of Françoise's work on her website at: francoise-nielly.com

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## Studio Raar

Studio RAAR is a design studio with a passion for esthetics, beauty and experiences. RAAR's designs have an attraction leaving you wanting to touch, use them, modify them.

Tactile values are at the center of their concepts and useability and practicality are not the most common words in RAAR's vocabulary.

Studio RAAR's founders
Niels Mulder and Maurice
Ciapponi combine industrial and graphic design. For
them, the essence of design
is not only producing something physical, the goal is to
materialise a concept with
a soul.

The results are products with a twist ("raar" is Dutch for strange); humour, crazy colours, exuberant designs, it's a way Studio RAAR translates its values into the work that makes them so individual. Sometimes using a product of Studio RAAR's can stretch your state of mind.

You can find more of Studio RAAR's creations at: studioraar.nl

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# **CANYON RETREAT**

RECORDING DEBUT ALBUM 'NORTH HILLS' AT A RANCH IN LAUREL CANYON, FOLK ROCK BAND DAWES PROVIDE THE PERFECT SOUNDTRACK TO ANY CITY ESCAPE WITH A TIMELESS SOUND THAT WILL WIN YOU OVER FROM THE VERY FIRST KEY

Born from the ashes of then rising indie rock band Simon Dawes, lead singer/guitarist Taylor Goldsmith and bassist Wylie Gelber were keen to keep working together, so embarked on a new musical project. Dropping 'Simon' from the former band's title - the middle name of departed guitarist Blake Mills, with whom they are still good friends - Dawes found a new

direction and a new lease of live in the refreshed line-up.

Recruiting Taylor's brother, Griffin, to play drums and stumbling upon Alex Casnoff for keyboard, there are certainly similarities to Simon Dawes' style, but the new music undoubtedly comes from a more planned out process to produce a glorious sound, far beyond the band's tender years. While Mills is now the live guitarist for Julian Casablancas, wroting much of the guitar on Casablancas' solo album, Dawes direction is classic folk rock, reminiscent of the 1970s era of music.

Originally from Malibu though now based in North Hills, close to Los Angeles, for the last two couple of years, Dawes have followed the Delta Spirit model of non-stop nationwide US tours, playing solo and support shows in venues of increasing size.

Somehow squeezing in time to write and record their debut album, named after their hometown, 'North Hills' was recorded live on 2" over a two week spell at a friend's house in Laurel Canyon. The LP has a great maturity to it, boasting the class of a fifth or sixth record, rather than a debut. Taylor's rich voice has great tone and soul, drawing out the honesty and power of his lyrics.

With a very timeless feel to their music, time on the road brings Dawes new fans every show with 'When My Time Comes' proving an instant crowd pleaser, though even with their slower song like 'That Western Skyline' or 'Peace In The Valley', they're still very accessible even on a first listen.

Debut album 'North Hills' is out now



# HANG TEN

GUITARS ARE BACK. NOT THAT THEY EVER WENT AWAY. THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THE SIX-STRING INSTRUMENT THAT CAN NEVER GO OUT OF STYLE. SURFER BLOOD. ARE ONE EXAMPLE. DIVING IN TO HELP WIPE-DIT THE VOID LEFT BY THE RECENT ELECTRO NOTHINGNESS.

Having formed just 6 months ago following an after-party to Miami's Ultra Festival, this fresh-faced five-piece have ascended the blogosphere swiftly, helped by a 12 show marathon at last month's renowned four day CMJ festival in New York.

Despite the name, the band

insists that none of them actually surf. Instead their title derives from the drunken cries of drummer Tyler Schwarz; "[he] was just wasted and yelled the name over and over", explains singer JP in a recent Pitchfork interview.

Whilst there are certainly traces of other influences, such as the Weezer-esque rock-pop riffs that seemingly make this band already sound stadium-ready, and the James Russell Mercer style delivery of the lyrics, it is difficult to disassociate them from the 'anti-surf' label. More than just the name, which is 'anti-surf' in its most basic pragmatic form, the amount of spring-reverb on the sea of Stratocaster guitars takes you back to classic surf bands like The Ventures, whilst

the beautifully harmonised vocals that float over the top are most certainly reminiscent of The Beach Boys. Even the cover of their forthcoming album, to be released January 2010 in the UK entitled 'Astro Coast', is dominated by a shark's gaping jaws.

Whilst there are dark, brooding songs on the album, the standout tracks are the upbeat, rif-led 'Swim (To Reach The End)', surely the single that will be making waves in the new year, and alread a fan favourite, 'Twin Peaks', a catchy, David Lynch-referencing pop gem. For the moment Surfer Blood are still testing the waters, expect them to take the full plunge early 2010.

Surfer Blood are currently touring North America



## **VARIOUS ARTISTS 'KITSUNE MAISON COMPILATION VOL. 8'**

#### **RELEASED OUT NOW**

Famed for breaking the latest and greatest electro talent, Kitsuné's new Maison compilation introduces the world to French Horn Rebellion, The Drums, Midnight Juggernauts, Amwe, Delphic and Notes, amongst others. Though Vol. 8 doesn't hit the heights of the last outing, there's still nowhere better for your fill of bands set to break through in 2010.





# ROGUES 'WIDOWS EP'

#### RELEASED NOVEMBER 23

Indie-rock tinged with '80s electro, but not in the over-used fashion we've seen over the last 18 months, on 'Widows EP', Rogues sound a little like White Lies lite, but far better than you could ever imagine. There's a sense of wonderment to their music which doesn't come along too often, meaning the only problem with the EP is the four track length.





## **GIRLS 'ALBUM'**

#### **RELEASED OUT NOW**

Surf meets post-punk, Girls' debut LP 'Album' is raw and ready, feeling throughly unproduced, allowing you to get to the heart of what their about in an instant. The album is brimming with enthusiasm, even if their laid back demanour doesn't always show it, and in tracks 'Lust For Life', 'God Damned' and 'Headache' they have shown real talent.





## STEREOPHONICS 'KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON'

#### **RELEASED OUT NOW**

Bland and unadventurous, Stereophonics' parade of rock for the public domain doesn't have the bite of any of their previous releases, which even then, didn't offer much beyond a couple singles. Cliché-ridden as ever, 'Keep Calm And Carry On' proves that Stereophics need to add a little imagination to their writing process to keep up with the new breed.





## THEM CROOKED VULTURES 'THEM CROOKED VULTURES'

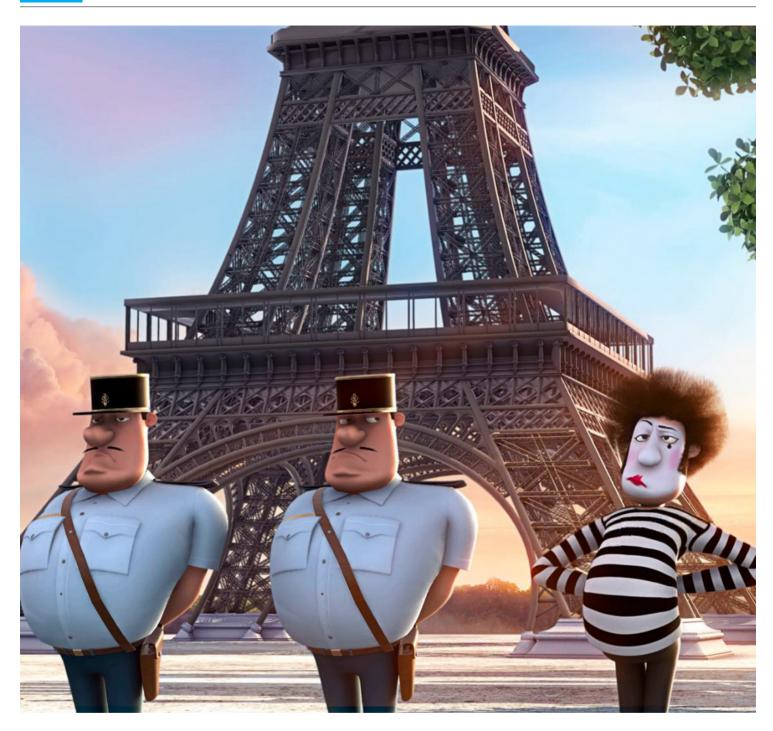
#### **RELEASED OUT NOW**

The collaboration of three living legends, Josh Homme (Queens Of The Stone Age, Eagles Of Death Metal), Dave Grohl (Foo Fighters, Nirvana) and John Paul Jones (Led Zeppelin), Them Crooked Vultures sounds closest to Homme's QOTSA but draw influence from each member for an energetic grunge rock album, even if it's not quite all you may have hoped.









# **DESPICABLE ME**

#### RELEASED JULY 9 2010 (USA) OCTOBER 15 2010 (UK)

In Despicable Me, the latest 3D computer animated feature from Universal Pictures, Steve Carell plays Gru, the second most dastardly supervillain in the world. He is, as the title suggests, despicable. Details of the plot are sparse at present, although a plot hatched by Gru to steal the moon seems to form the epicentre of the

film. His despicable nature is naturally challenged, however, when he meets a trio of orphaned girls who cause him to rethink his life.

The film's premise, then, is both fairly original and decidedly derivative. The second trailer released shows Gru attempting to infiltrate the compound of number one supervillain Vector, with a series of familiar slapstick gags ensuing. Although it is unclear exactly how the strands will come together, the audience can expect some classic moralising to take place over the film's

well-reigned run time.

The animation looks good on early inspection with imaginative, if familiar-looking, characters and a pleasantly bright colour palette. The supporting cast also includes a couple of notable British names in Julie Andrews and Russell Brand. The boom in CGI features is hardly surprising, after all, these films almost universally make money, but there is a sense of repetition beginning to creep in. Despicable Me will hopefully be unique enough to stand out from the crowd.



# THE A-TEAM

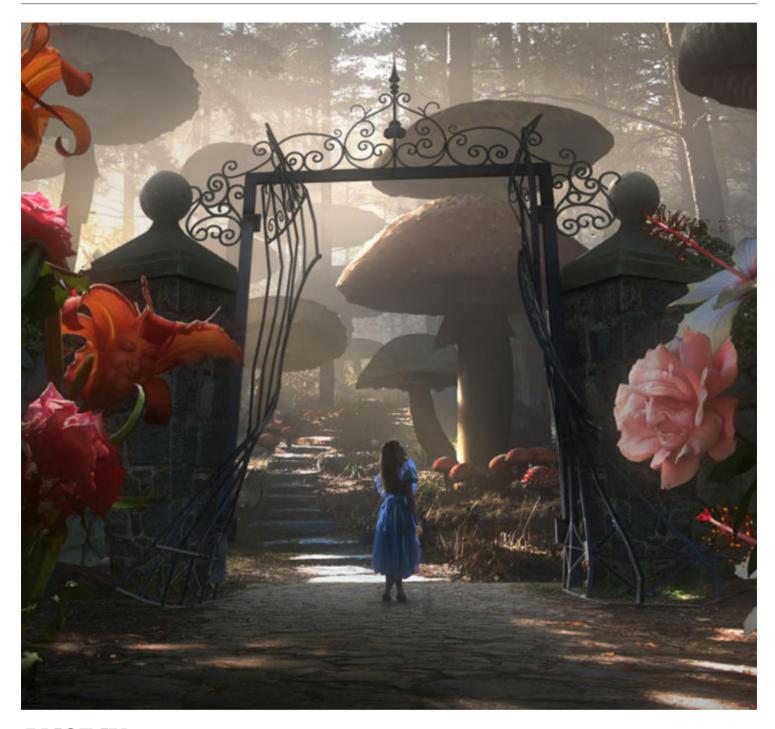
#### RELEASED JUNE 11 2010 (USA) JULY 30 2010 (UK)

Quite a cast has been assembled for Joe Carnahan's feature length A-Team adaptation, and that is the main reason excitement levels have been peeked. The A-Team's distinctly '80s brand of serialised action was something oddly unique and didn't seem in need of a makeover. That said, nothing is beyond the remake bandwagon at present so here we are awaiting another 'updated' product.

The newly-imagined A-Team consists of Quinton 'Rampage' Jackson, a former MMA fighter, taking over the role of Mr. T's iconic B.A. Baracus, Bradley Cooper (The Hangover) as Faceman, District 9's Sharlto Copley as Murdock - potentially inspired casting - and to crown it all off, Liam Neeson as Colonel John 'Hannibal' Smith. Not much is known about the plot yet,

although it will be in some way related, shock, horror, to the Middle East.

Whether the film will maintain the original series' macho, explosionheavy mentality and amusingly offthe-wall antics remains to be seen. Writer Michael Brandt has compared his script to Die Hard and Casino Royale, so perhaps we're in for something a little different in tone to the original programme. Will Carnahan's film be enough to draw a new generation of viewers into fold? Only time will tell.



# **ALICE IN** WONDERLAND

#### **RELEASED MARCH 5 2010**

Tim Burton's gothic aesthetic is instantly recognisable throughout his back catalogue and viewers will likely know by now if they love or hate it. This new take on Lewis Carroll's tale

continues his tendency towards the weird and wonderful, taking place 12 years after the original story, with Alice, played by Australian actress Mia Wasikowska, returning to the land she visited long ago but since forgot.

Burton's visual flair is written all over this. The stylish look of the film has been moulded using a mixture of live action and motion-capture technology, blending seamlessly to create an unsurprisingly sinister looking Wonderland. Regular Burton collaborators Helena Bonham Carter

and Johnny Depp turn up once again as the Queen of Hearts and the Mad Hatter, respectively. Elsewhere, Steven Fry's grinning Cheshire Cat looks to be a highlight; his menacing stare dominating the screen.

All signs point towards an intriguing and stylish adventure, even if the visuals and cast stick resolutely to Burton's tried and tested methods. Hopefully the tale will turn out to be as original as the trailers make it out to be and not simply a retread of past interpretations.



# SHERLOCK HOLMES

#### **RELEASED DECEMBER 26**

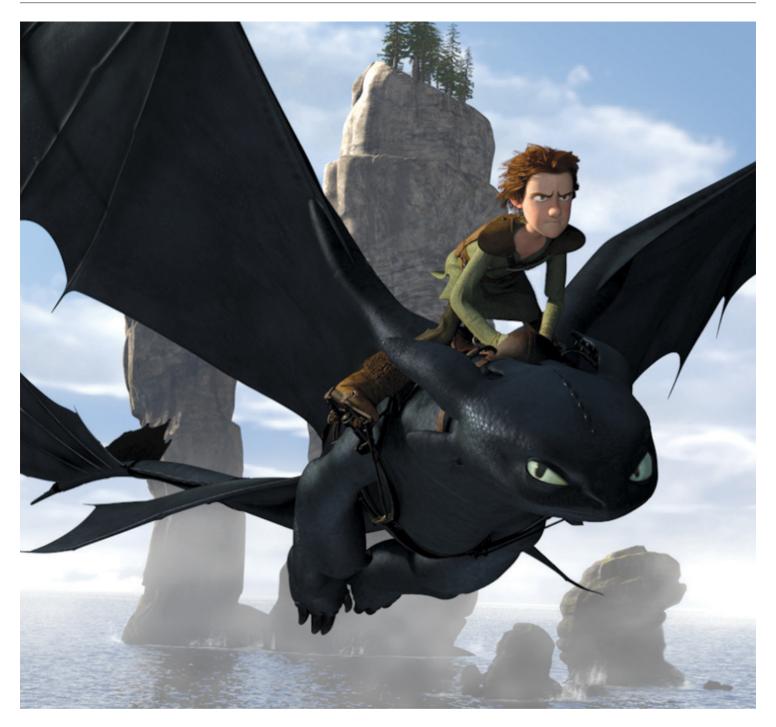
I wonder what Sir Arthur Conan Doyle would have made of Guy Ritchie's upcoming reimagining of his iconic character? It's a facetious thought and, as most people predicted when Ritchie announced his new project, this is by no means a traditional Holmes tale.

There is no reason it should be traditional, of course, though Ritchie's film will inevitably have to bridge a gap of cynicism in certain quarters. This is an adaptation that must be judged on its own merits; clearly, the film will be a much greater step from the source material than we have seen before.

Sherlock Holmes features, TV films, series and specials have been rife in decades gone by, but I doubt most of them combined could accumulate the amount of explosions and gunshots packed into the trailer for this new age Holmes. For those of us with a predisposed view of what Sherlock Holmes

is and always has been, the trailer is somewhat confounding. Watching Holmes crack off one-liners, brawling in slow motion and 'getting it on' with the lovely Rachel McAdams, is all rather anachronistic.

Cynicism aside, however, and the film does appear to have merits. Downey Jr. cuts a charismatic figure as Holmes, clearly revelling in his English accent, and his partnership with Jude Law, as Watson, comes across as natural and fun. The film's story will hopefully make the most of this potentially lively double act and re-establish Ritchie as a talent to be watched.



# **HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON**

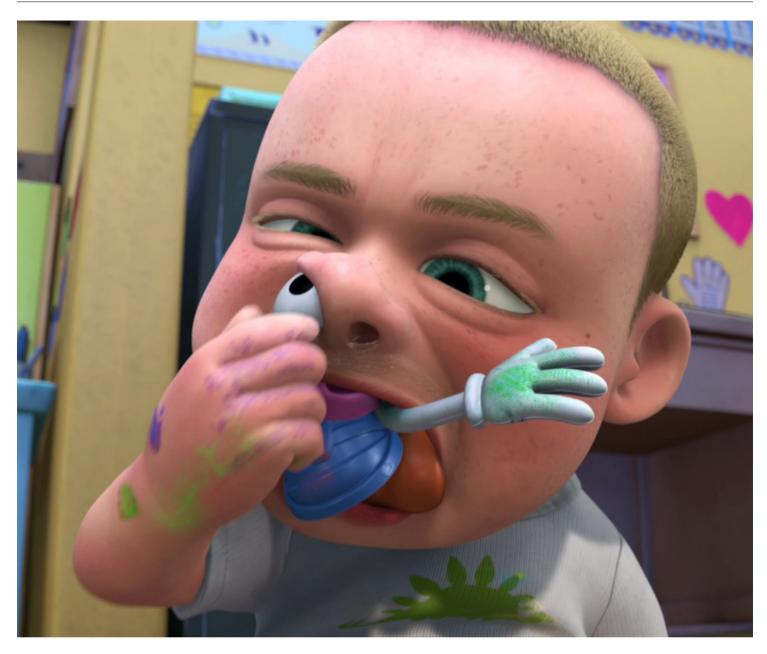
#### RELEASED MARCH 26 2010 (USA) MARCH 31 2010 (UK)

DreamWorks Animation, most recently of Monsters Vs. Aliens and Madagascar 2 fame, are back in 2010 with How to Train Your Dragon, a featurelength CGI adaptation of the 2003

children's book of the same name. The story follows a young Viking named Hiccup who doesn't fit the traditional villager mould. He thinks before he acts, isn't headstrong and, worst of all, befriends a dragon, sworn enemy of the Vikings.

Hiccup's tribe are expert dragonslayers, and obviously his friendship with rare dragon Toothless is going to cause problems. Jay Baruchel voices Hiccup as he tries to convince his fellow Vikings, voiced by, amongst others, Gerard Butler and Christopher Mintz-Plasse, that killing dragons is not a prerequisite of their existence.

The film's visuals are familiar perhaps slightly darker in tone than most animations - and show off some exciting graphics. The 'monsters are misunderstood' morality brings back memories of Disney's classic animation Beauty And The Beast, though the film would need to be something special to top that. In a crowded room filled with upcoming animated releases, How To Train Your Dragon will be hoping, like so many others, to stand out.



# **TOY STORY 3**

#### RELEASED JUNE 18 2010 (USA) JULY 23 2010 (UK)

There is always an element of worry when even the best studios choose to return to existing series, rather than pursue new ideas. The promise of forthcoming sequels to a variety of films from Pixar's back catalogue was met with a strange mix of enthusiasm and scepticism. The long-planned sequel to Cars we have known about for some time and the third Toy Story film has probably been shuffling around for even longer. Versions of the film have been brought forward and shelved in

the past due to a variety of factors including Disney's 2006 takeover, but in 2010 we'll finally see Woody, Buzz and co. back on the big screen.

The evidence of Toy Story 2 suggests that the lack of other Pixar sequels is not down to a problem of quality, and so really we should all be excited about this latest entry in the series. Cars 2 and the proposed sequel to Monsters Inc. will have to wait their turn. The plot follows the next logical step in the life of Andy, who is now all grown up and off to college, creating a dilemma: what happens to the toys of his youth? What the film does with inherent themes of irrelevance and becoming obsolete will be intriguing,

as the toys band together to find a new meaning for themselves.

Although initially the thought of returning to the series might have raised a few eyebrows after ten years away, the trailer, which reunites us with the classic characters, is pleasantly familiar. The humour, too, seems to be in place; a great gag about Buzz being reset and set to Spanish language mode is sure to raise laughs. Likewise, the wonderfully constructed voice cast is back in force to infuse the characters with the life we're used to. In other hands, there might be doubts about a second sequel in this franchise, but Pixar haven't put a foot wrong for so long it's hard to doubt them.

# LONDON FILM FESTIVAL 2009 NICK DEIGMAN REVIEWS THE BEST IN SHOW FROM THE LONDON'S MOMENT IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The 53rd Times BFI London Film Festival was yet another indefinable and auspicious gala of cinema. In a city that prides itself on its open-mindedness, hospitality, and passion for artistic endeavour, it is only right that its film festival should welcome films from across the globe, in any genre and budget margin, and of any political persuasion.

This year's festival did just that; opening with Wes Anderson's adventurous and playful take on one of Britain's most adored literary figures, Fantastic Mr Fox, and inviting a whole host of Hollywood studio films, most notably Up In The Air and The Road, to present themselves to a more discerning British audience. American independent cinema was also out in force at this year's festival with Jim Jarmusch leading a pack of bright young things; Tom Ford, director of the heartbreaking, A Single Man, and Lee Daniels, director of the quite extraordinary Precious, were surely the stars of this entourage.

As is the norm., the French contingent made the short trip across the channel to provide a masterclass in filmmaking. André Téchiné's whimsical but cutting domestic drama, The Girl On The Train, was wonderful, but Jacques Audiard's latest offering, Un Prophete, stole the limelight by winning the festival's Grand Prize.

Moving inland towards the Germanic heart of

Europe, this year's festival surely wouldn't have been complete without Michael Haneke's Palme d'Or winning, The White Ribbon. The film marks a return to Haneke's native language for the first time in over a decade, and it is a truly remarkable, beautiful and chilling picture from one of the finest living filmmakers.

From outside Europe, there was a robust and varied offering from the world cinema contingent. Perhaps most notable amongst these were the astonishing Israeli war drama, Lebanon, and the subtle and brutal Australian film, Samson & Delilah.

Unfortunately, British cinema didn't seem to have the stamina to hold out at this talent-packed festival. David Morrisey's directorial debut Don't Worry About Me and Lindy Heymann's Kicks failed to impress critics or audiences, and while 44 Inch Chest and The Disappearance Of Alice Cree' boasted some fine performances and gritty, dark imagery, they were never going to be considered contenders for any of the festival's awards.

The British film industry was saved from embarrassment in the festival's twilight hours, however, with Scouting Book for Boys earning screenwriter Jack Thorne a Best British Newcomer award, and Sam Taylor Wood's fantastic Nowhere Boy proved that British films can still compete with the even best American and French productions.



# **UP IN THE AIR**

DIRECTED BY JASON REITMAN STARRING GEORGE CLOONEY, VERA FARMIGA. ANNA KENDRICK, JASON BATEMAN. DANNY MCBRIDE & MELANIE LYNSKEY

#### RELEASED DECEMBER 4 (USA) JANUARY 15 2010 (USA)

Ryan Bingham (Clooney) is a suave and sophisticated nomad. He lives 10,000 feet 'up in the air' and he is as uncomfortable on the ground, staying in one place, as most other people are during take-off and landing. Ryan's job - he fires people for a living - means that he is travels for around 362 days every year. He has a lavish selection of travelling accessories, but his apartment looks more like a hospital room that a home.

But Ryan likes it this way. He is constantly surrounded by people who don't bother him with their emotional baggage, all too busy with their physical baggage, and he can enjoy fleeting romances with the beautiful Alex (Farmiga), and devour complimentary buffet meals ad infinitum; he even has a dream, if he reaches 10m airmiles, he will get a plane named after him.

This contented existence is obliterated by the arrival of a feisty, headstrong college graduate, Natalie (Kendrick), who wants to increase the company's efficiency by firing people via webcam, rather than sending Ryan and his peers to do it in person. Ryan protests on the basis that this is a cold and heartless way to perform a delicate act, but his real problem is the terrifying prospect of having to work in an office and lose his home in the sky.

Ryan is tasked with showing Natalie the ropes; arriving at the airport with a cumbersome suitcase, we soon realise that Natalie is the Donkey to Ryan's Shrek; she is a needy and annoying hormonal adolescent with the backbone of a fifty-year-old spinster. But Ryan graciously shows her how to survive in his bewildering world of departure lounges and connecting flights, and eventually they begin to see eye to eye.

While this relationship provides some light-hearted, but genuinely funny, comedy, this really is a thoughtful film about the nomadic existence that so many people seem to lead in this fast-paced modern world. The prospect of having to settle down forces Ryan to consider

his options, and he begins a more serious relationship with Alex. He also agrees to go to his sister's wedding, and it is here that he realises a life filled with attachments and emotional baggage might not be such a hard life after all.

Jason Reitman has proved once again, after Thank You for Smoking and Juno, that he has a masterful eye for thought-provoking, fast-paced comedies. This film is infinitely superior to its US comedy cousin at this festival. The Men Who Stare At Goats. That film is insincere, cheap, and meaningless but Up In The Air works hard to achieve its funny moments, and they are all the more raucous and enjoyable for it.

Nobody other than George Clooney could have played this role. He is a modern-day Cary Grant, not just because of his looks and his demeanour, but because of the public's constant fascination at his inability to settle down. Clooney, more than any other Hollywood A-lister, is famous for his nomadic and freespirited lifestyle, and the emotional honesty he brings to Ryan Bingham makes this film feel like a brief glimpse inside Clooney's own soul.





## **PASSENGER SIDE**

#### DIRECTED BY MATT BISSONNETTE STARRING ADAM SCOTT & JOEL BISSONNETTE RELEASED TBC

Michael is awoken on the morning of his 37th birthday by a phone call from his annoying, ex-drug addict brother, Toby, who persuades Michael to ditch his girlfriend and spend the day driving around on some mysterious mission. What follows is a lackadaisical, but undeniably dramatic, journey around the outskirts of LA.

The conversation revolves around quirky witticisms that serve chiefly to showcase the comedic sensibilities of the filmmaker, but the dialogue never quite sinks into the frustrating realm of "talking for talking's sake". There is a constant undercurrent of sibling rivalry, male bonding, and that childishness that rears its head whenever we spend too much time with our immediate family.

The cinematography is simple, but it captures perfectly the unique atmosphere of east LA. It feels hot and claustrophobic, but occasionally a breeze finds its way from the Pacific through to this cracked and dusty settlement of hedonists and writers. Add to this a soundtrack consisting of Dinosaur Jr, Wilco, Leonard Cohen, and more, and you have a laid-back, quirky, slacker road movie that is definitely worth a watch.





## THE DISAPPEARANCE OF ALICE CREED

#### DIRECTED BY J BLAKESON STARRING GEMMA ARTERTON. EDDIE MARSAN & MARTIN COMPSTON RELEASED TBC

Vic and Danny are busy soundproofing and securing an apartment with locks and chains. They steal a van and kidnap a young woman (Alice). They strip her naked and take pictures of her. This is a ruthlessly efficient ransom plot planned by Vic, with the young and insubordinate Danny as his accomplice. The first revelation comes when Vic leaves to call Alice's father, Danny enters the bedroom and removes his mask, and we realise that Alice is actually his girlfriend. She is understandably furious, but agrees to go along with the ruse so that they can get her father's money and run away. The next revelation comes when we realise that Danny and Vic are lovers.

The mind games and quasioriginal twists continue in this fashion, with Alice almost escaping and Vic realising that she and Danny know each other, until most of the characters end up dead or bleeding. This is certainly not the

most original of stories, but 'story' isn't necessarily everything in a thriller. Nobody bemoaned Cronenberg for his simplified plots, and while J Blakeson is certainly no David Cronenberg, the tension that builds up within the confines of this secure and soundproof apartment is visceral and bordering on powerful.

There is a minimalism to the performances that suits Eddie Marsan and Martin Compston, surely two of the finest actors of recent years, perfectly, and Gemma Arterton delivers a well-rounded, panicked performance that feels tangible rather than annoying.

Once you have overcome the absurdity of the title - she hasn't disappeared, she is rarely off the screen - and the fact that Blakeson treats some of his laughably obvious twists as though they were intricate plotlines, there is an enjoyable and sometimes tense film to be enjoyed here.





## THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN

#### DIRECTED BY ANDRÉ TÉCHINÉ STARRING EMILIE DEQUENNE. CATHERINE DENUEVE. MICHEL BLANC. MATH-IEU DEMY & RONIT ELKABETZ RELEASED TBC

Jeanne is a wayward young woman with a controlling mother. She is forced to apply for work at a law firm, but instead she moves in with a rebellious wrestler. After a brutal incident. Jeanne finds herself alone again with only her cold mother for comfort. In a cry for help, she cuts herself and pretends that an anti-Semitic gang attacked her because of her mother's involvement with a prominent Jewish lawyer.

This simple story is the backdrop for a leisurely, inter-weaving exploration of human relationships against the backdrop of a resurgence in French anti-Semitism. The film is realistic without being unnecessarily gritty or depressing and there is a sense of wonder, helped along by the eerie soundtrack and sporadic and unpredictable cinematography that always keep the audience interested and intrigued. Emilie Dequenne is also mesmerising in the lead role.





### SHE, A CHINESE DIRECTED BY XIAOLU GUO STARRING LU HUANG. WEI YIBO & GEOFFREY HUTCHINGS RELEASED TBC

'She' is Mei, an young Chinese woman who escapes her rural village to a larger city, and then on to London. This premise is quite interesting, and Mei's journey is certainly filled with potentially dramatic situations; she is raped and then abused as a worker, she marries an

old Englishman just so she can stay in Britain, and becomes pregnant by a man who runs away.

Unfortunately, Guo lacks the conviction to confront the subject matter she has chosen and every time a deep artistic sensibility is called for, she simply runs from it and chooses a new dramatic situation. The result is a dull and episodic film that lacking in integrity or emotional depth.



## **STARSUCKERS**

#### DIRECTED BY CHRIS ATKINS RELEASED OUT NOW

Starsuckers is the second documentary feature from Chris Atkins, Britain's answer to the chubby, militant liberal, Michael Moore. Similarly to Moore, Atkins' stirring rhetoric is used as a substitute for the integrity, reason, and humility that many documentary filmmakers hold dear. After his debut, Taking Liberties - the irony of the title wasn't lost on me either - Atkins has trained his untrained eye on the cult of celebrity and the modern media circus. This is undoubtedly one of the most poisonous and dangerous aspects of modern British society, but it is hardly something we are unaware of. The film has a few interesting points to make, such as the anthropological argument that man has evolved to follow 'leaders' and mimic their actions, and a delightfully damning critique of Bob Geldof's harmful and self-centred 'charity' campaigns, but unless you enjoy Michael Moore's exploitative, stirring, and satirical take on the documentary form, you probably wont enjoy this low-brow documentary either.



# BAD LIEUTENANT: PORT OF CALL NEW ORLEANS

DIRECTED BY WERNER HERZOG STARRING NICHOLAS CAGE. VAL KILMER. EVA MENDEZ. XZIBIT & JENNIFER COOLIDGE RELEASED NOVEMBER 20 (USA) TBC 2010 (UK)

The 1992 Bad Lieutenant, starring Harvey Keitel as a corrupt New York cop, was a classic Abel Ferrera film throughout. Keitel spends more time gambling, taking class-A drugs and abusing young women that he does investigating homicides, but he finds himself questioning his choices while investigating the rape of a young nun. That film therefore dealt with typical New York themes like sleaze, urban decay and Catholicism, and it had the Ferrera tag of exploitation and cheese to go with it.

Herzog's Bad Lieutenant: Port of Call New Orleans transports the action from the Big Apple to the Big Easy, as Nicholas Cage's Lieutenant, Terence, investigates a gangland killing in the wake of hurricane Katrina. Cage is promoted to Lieutenant largely because so many people left New Orleans after the hurricane, and his drug addiction is explained by an agonizing and chronic pain in his back caused by jumping into a flooded prison to save a prisoner.

These may seem like cosmetic amendments to Ferrera's idea, but the perspective and direction of the film are shifted massively. This 'bad lieutenant' is no longer in a position to analyse his own destructive behaviour and continues to dig himself further and further into trouble as the film plays out. Terence is like a malicious and self-destructive version of the Philip Marlowe in Altman's The Long Goodbye; he constantly bumbles from one terrible and seemingly inescapable situation to the next. He jumps from the frying pan, to the fire, and back again for the entire duration of the film, upsetting loan sharks, mafia bosses, drug dealers, police chiefs, district

attorneys... the list goes on.

Newly promoted Terence is supposed to be investigating the murder of a Senegalese family in the middle of Big Fate's (Xzibit) territory. But Terence is far too busy scoring drugs and 'protecting' Frankie (Mendez) to concentrate on the case and things start to unravel when Terence rushes to a casino to save Frankie from a gangster 'client'. He loses the key witness that he has been looking after, thereby destroying the case against Fate, and also makes enemies of the mafia who demand \$50,000 from him after roughing up Frankie's client, and the chief of police after beating up a politician's elderly mother in a care home. To make matters worse, he owes a shady bookie \$15,000 after a string of bad bets. Terence is at his wits end; he is strung out on drugs, his life is in danger, he has had his badge and gun taken away, and he owes a lot of money, but he isn't the sort of guy who lets things get on top of him. I won't explain how Terence attempts to fix all these problems because that is where the real satisfaction of the film lies, but I will tell you that it is a fantastically entertaining and original piece of filmmaking that will have you laughing and twisting in your seat with glee and anticipation at every twist and turn.

The cast list is quite breathtaking for such an under-publicised film. Cage is joined by Val Kilmer, his police partner, Eva Mendez, his prostitute girlfriend, Xzibit, the kingpin gang leader, and a few other recognisable faces from Herzog's extensive filmography. It is Cage that really makes this film though. He is truly electrifying in this role and combines the snarling, venomous evil of Face/Off with the nihilistic apathy of Leaving Las Vegas, somehow still finding room for some of the charming anti-hero honesty of Raising Arizona. Say what you like about Nick Cage, but here he has created a nasty and uncontrollable anti-hero that you just cant help caring about.

This film is also 'Herzog' to the very end. He is probably the only filmmaker who could have created such a complex, sporadic, and thoughtful take on Ferrera's film, while also making it the one of the funniest entries at this year's festival. Herzog's relaxed attitude to filmmaking, and his willingness to do away with the rulebook and the concepts of classical Hollywood cinema, allows the story to stray wildly outside the lines. It is not neat, it is often unrealistic, and it might be the least responsible film since Fear And Loathing In Las Vegas, but it is also frenetic and utterly hysterical.

There is really no way to describe the playfulness and exquisite timing of the comedy in this film. It is partially Herzog's zany artistry, and partly Cage's masterful control of facial expressions and comic delivery. I have tried to write out a few anecdotes from the film to give you a taste, but they just aren't funny on paper because you need to see it to believe it, plus they only funny in the context of the moment in which it is occurring, and the wider context of the story.

You will just have to trust me and the hundred-or-so journalists who were rolling in the aisles and gave the film the first ovation of the 2009 LFF screenings.







## **GLORIOUS 39**

#### DIRECTED BY STEPHEN POLIAKOFF STARRING Romola Garai, Bill Nighy & Julie Christie Released February 12 2010 (UK) TBC (USA)

Anne is the adopted daughter of an aristocratic family in 1940s Britain. The head of the family, a conservative MP, and his son, who works at the foreign office, are both opposed the approaching war with Germany and determined to maintain their way of life. When Anne stumbles across some recordings of secret government meetings at their family home, she believes there is a conspiracy to prevent the war. This gripping psychological thriller follows Anne as she becomes entangled in a web of dark and menacing secrets. She is betrayed by all around her, finally realising that an adopted daughter isn't necessarily a member of the family, and many of those she holds dear are killed. Stephen Poliakoff is famed for his television period pieces but this is a magnificent return to the big screen. The eeriness of the film and the sudden sense of loneliness that we share with Anne as we realise the depth of the betrayal that she has suffered, bare comparison with The Wicker Man, while the directorial vision of the film is sumptuous and epic and yet wonderfully claustrophobic and dark.





# **44 INCH CHEST**

# DIRECTED BY MALCOLM VENVILLE STARRING RAY WINSTONE, TOM WILKINSON, JOHN HURT & IAN MCSHANE RELEASED JANUARY 22 2010 (UK) TBC (USA)

When Colin's wife leaves him, he assembles his cumbersome entourage of South London gangsters to kidnap her new man and hide him in an abandoned building. They then spend the rest of the evening working out how to teach the kid a lesson. We are watching a group of men reconvening in an abandoned

building after committing a crime, but while the story is uninteresting and the characters clichéd, there is something gritty and well-conceived in the pace and tone of the film that helps 44 Inch Chest stand up to its infinitely superior parallel, Reservoir Dogs. Bizarrely, Winstone is by far the best actor here; Wilkinson barely features, and I felt genuinely embarrassed for John Hurt as the ageing and perhaps slightly senile thespian forced out an appalling Vinny Jones impression for his lines.





## **SWEETHEARTS OF THE PRISON RODEO**

#### DIRECTED BY BRADLEY BEESLEY RELEASED TBC

Oklahoma State Penitentiary runs a famous prison rodeo, and it recently opened the competition to female inmates. Coincidentally, Oklahoma has one of the highest female incarceration rates in the US. Fertile ground, then, for a hard-hitting documentary about the failings of modern society, cut through with a sense of hope and resilience as exhibited by the 'sweethearts'. Unfortunately, Beesley forgot to

include anything from the 'failings of society' angle.

We never examine why the women are in jail, how many of them are repeat offenders, etc. The penitentiary seems more like a summer camp than a prison, and the film is never anything more than a quaint and unimportant story about a group of girls bonding and trying to beat "the guys".





# THE ROAD

DIRECTED BY JOHN HILLCOAT STARRING VIGGO
MORTENSEN, KODI SMIT-MCPHEE, CHARLIZE THERON,
ROBERT DUVALL, GUY PEARCE & MICHAEL K. WILLIAMS

#### RELEASED NOVEMBER 26 (USA) JANUARY 8 2010 (USA)

Based on the critically acclaimed, Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by Cormac McCarthy, The Road is a wonderfully bleak journey through a land and population torn apart by a worldwide cataclysm. Following the footsteps of a man (Mortensen) and his son (Smit-McPhee) as they search for food, shelter and safety within the danger of a collapsed society, The Road is epic in the truest sense, confronting the pair with great hardships without ever flickering light at the end of the tunnel.

The Road is certainly a tiring experience, engrossing from the first to last minute, but maintaining an intensity that might wear audiences down faster than even the book.

This, however, is what we should come to expect from a plot offering so little hope. The interplay between Mortensen and Smit-McPhee is remarkable and it is their performances that make the film such a memorable experience. The dialogue is relatively limited but what they achieve with their tone of expression and physical portrayals really gives the film a lease of life, albeit one of endless hardship. The pair certainly throw the film into Oscar contention, on both an individual basis, and for the production as a whole.

Shot entirely on location in areas with the feel of a post-apocalyptic world, where buildings had been ravaged by fire or disrepair, the success of the location scouting and set development makes the film feel thoroughly believable. Combined with the use of CGI is replace the sky and take the greenery out of some scenes, the ambience and tone make The Road highly engrossing and a captivating experience.

Though the cinematography is stunning and the film is shot with a

real elegance that brings a strange beauty to the catastrophic surroundings, the intentional monotone palette does have its own drawbacks. Combined with the sheer raw emotion in the relationship between man and boy, The Road is not an easy watch by any stretch of the imagination, and perhaps the film's greatest weakness, it isn't a very rewarding one either. The book is famous for its utterly bleak tale but for cinematic audiences it's important to offer something for people to latch onto, and it's hard to really latch onto the mindset and turmoil of the man and boy. The plot comes across a little cold, and though you'll still be pleased you sat through it, it's fair to want a little more back for vour investment.

The Road is no doubt a brilliant film and the harrowing images on screen make it hard to turn away, though it is slightly undone by the somewhat inaccessible narrative and overblown score by frequent Hillcoat collaborator Nick Cave.



# A SINGLE MAN

#### DIRECTED BY TOM FORD STARRING COLIN FIRTH. JULIANNE MOORE. MATTHEW GOODE. GINNIFER GOODWIN & NICHOLAS HOULT RELEASED DECEMBER 11 (USA) FEBRUARY 12 2010 (UK)

Los Angeles, 1962. George (Firth), a gay English university professor has just been informed that his lover of 16 years, Jim (Goode), has been killed in a car accident. But George is not allowed to attend the funeral because Jim's family disapproves of their "abominable" relationship. What follows is a fascinating and melancholy character study of a man who has lost the only thing he loved, but is not allowed to openly grieve.

The man is a gay professor and the thing he loved, his partner, but stripping away the macrocosm of the film, this is a universal story about the tendency to avoid grief wherever possible. We are told that grief and despair are unattractive qualities that should be repressed; this film is a testament to the importance of acknowledging grief, both within ourselves and to those close to us.

The film follows George on the day he has decided to kill himself. He meticulously arranges everything from his bed sheets to his tax returns before exploring the intricacies of shooting himself inside a sleeping bag to avoid unnecessary mess. There is something darkly comedic about this early sequence, aided by Firth's plodding despondency, but it points towards a much grittier reality; he has spent so long grieving silently, not wanting to get in anybody's way, that even in death he is trying to remain considerate.

George's efforts are interrupted by a phone call from his best friend - the ageing but gorgeous spinster hipster, Charley (Moore) - begging him to have dinner with her that evening. George agrees, and so the timeframe is set; we will have our intriguing protagonist for one day.

This day sees George interacting with a number of beautiful young men: from a flirtatious student to a smouldering rent boy at a convenience store. He sees Jim in all these men, and his attraction to them seems to be based less on sexuality and more on a desperate need to confront his hidden grief and tear at the suture of his broken heart.

George's dinner with Charley is a beautifully conceived scene, largely because the characters are so perfectly moulded. Charley has been in love with George for many years, and her own troubled life and sense of exclusion from society have left her just as broken as him. The fact that they are English people living in a foreign land is a simple conceit, but it helps to reiterate the fact that this unusual couple are stranded in a strange world that doesn't want to acknowledge them.

This 'dinner' sequence is certainly beautifully plotted and performed, with all the emotions simmering just below the surface; but one can't help but feel that this was the film's one chance at an explosive and cathartic argument of Albeeesque proportions. That this is never achieved certainly doesn't hurt the film, but it could have elevated the visceral and emotional impact on the viewer to a new height of drama.

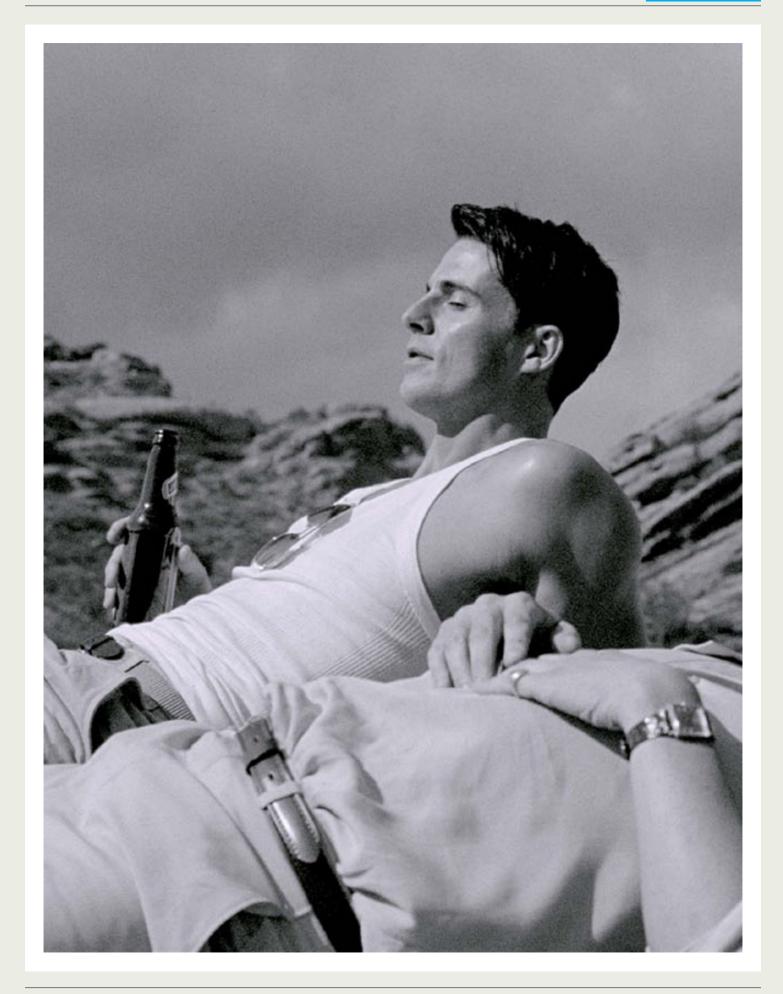
George heads to the beach bar where he first met Jim, and runs into his university student (who has been tailing him all evening). This naïve and confident young man provides the burst of uncontrollable energy that has been so desperately lacking in George's life since Jim's death. They swim naked in the ocean and kiss passionately. There is no

romance here – it is just a broken professor kissing his awe-filled student - but there is a sense that George has found a way to go on living. He hasn't found love, he hasn't overcome his grief, it is not as insincere as all that, but he has discovered away to confront his grief alone.

A Single Man is the debut feature from fashion designer Tom Ford, former creative head of Gucci. The visual style of the film is therefore predictably stunning and precise. Anybody with a passion for 1960s aesthetics (from fashion and interior design to cars and kitchen appliances) will be mesmerised by the meticulous attention to detail, and the beauty that Ford instils in every frame. What could never have been predicted, however, was the effortless talent that Ford has for storytelling. As well as directing, Ford also adapted the original novel himself (with the help of David Scearce). The pace of the film, and the way the emotions and themes are so densely inter-woven and undulate so rhythmically, is virtually perfect; and it is almost unfathomable that this was achieved by a first-time director.

Colin Firth is extraordinary in the leading role. His natural demeanor and slow-plodding rhythm bring an intense and tangible sadness to his character, but there is always something warm and comforting in Firth's personality, and this helps to bring empathy to a withdrawn and lonely man. Julianne Moore is naturally perfect as Charley, a whirlwind of curses, ashtrays, and empty gin bottles, crashing around her lavish apartment with a frenetic and misdirected purpose.







## HIS & HERS

#### DIRECTED BY KEN WARDROP RELEASED TBC

His and Hers is a flowing series of interviews with women of all ages, explaining what is happening at that period of their lives. The speaker changes every few moments, but as we move gradually from a toddler to a frail, elderly old lady, we get a sense that this is one, universal 'woman'. John Locke suggested that humans are like rivers; you can never see a river in its entirety, but when you pass the same river at two different points you know it is the same one, even though it has completely changed

in character and appearance. That is what this film reminds me of... a woman at the age of five and a woman at the age of ninety can have the same sense of humour. the same calm sense of understanding, and the same unsettling understanding of men. They deal with problems in the same way, whether they are being forced to clean their room, reminding their boyfriend that he has to help around the house, or dealing with the loss of a husband after forty years of marriage. The film creates a rich tapestry of memories, and in so doing it explains just how precious and fleeting life is.





## THE LIMITS OF CONTROL

DIRECTED BY JIM JARMUSCH STARRING ISSACH DE BANKOLE, TILDA SWINTON, JOHN HURT, BILL MURRAY E CAFL BARCIA BERNAL RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) DECEMBER 11 (UK)

Jim Jarmusch is a universally treasured artist, a living legend with a permanent place in the US indie cinema hall of fame, but that doesn't change the fact that this is a terrible film. While Stranger Than Paradise and Mystery Train had a punk aesthetic and experimental edge, and Broken Flowers had a melancholy maturity that signalled his depth of emotion, The Limits of Control is

a cold, heartless film that has been made entirely for it's own sake. I hope Jarmusch et al had a thoroughly enjoyable time making it, but I see no reason why anybody else should have to watch; it says absolutely nothing about anything.

The story follows De Bakole's 'hitman' as he travels across Spain picking up coded messages from a host of globally renowned actors on his way to the 'hit'.

This is the 'hitman movie' premise, but it has absolutely no effect on the tone, pace or themes of the film. The Limits Of Control is closer to Coffee and Cigarettes than Ghost Dog and you cant help but feel that it is just an exercise in pretentious

acting (Tilda Swinton is guilty of the most self-indulgent performance) rather than a carefully plotted feature film.

There is no denying that the aesthetic of the film is faultlessly beautiful, but there is surely no need to even mention this when discussing a film photographed by Christopher Doyle, it is simply a given. And it doesn't look better than any of the good films that Doyle has photographed, so I strongly recommend you watch one of those instead, and leave this self-important, meaningless reel to rot in Jarmusch's basement until he decides to make a film for other people again.





# **NOWHERE BOY**

DIRECTED BY SAM TAYLOR WOOD STARRING AARON JOHNSON. KRISTEN SCOTT THOMAS. ANNE MARIE DUFF. DAVID MORRISEY & THOMAS BRODIE SANGSTER

#### RELEASED DECEMBER 26 (UK) TBC (USA)

John Lennon (Johnson) was constantly in trouble at school for bullying, playing truant, and reading 'illicit' magazines. He had a strained relationship with his strict, positively Victorian Aunt and legal guardian, Mimi (Scott Thomas), and his only friend through these years was his loving and free-spirited Uncle George (Threlfall), so when George dies of a heart attack John decides it is time to seek out his mother.

Julia (Marie Duff) turns out to be a wild, fun-loving young woman, and when John gets suspended from school he hides the fact from Mimi and spends his days listening to 'rock and roll' and learning the guitar with his mother. This brief glimpse of hope and happiness is though stamped out and the film becomes a destructive and passionate story of confused love and the difficulties of

forgiving people for things you have already forgotten.

John escapes into the exciting new world of 'rock and roll'. He founds The Quarrymen, meets Paul McCartney, and begins to find some success. But John's heart is poisoned by the unanswered questions about why his own mother couldn't raise him, and it is clear he cannot be happy until he understands his past.

The performances are predictably excellent. Anne Marie Duff was spectacular in Shameless and she brings the same rough, dazzling beauty to Julia. David Threlfall is one of the most wonderful talents in Britain, and it is a shame that his character has so little screen time. The finest performance, however, is that of Kristin Scott Thomas. She is powerful and alluring, yet delicate and easily hurt; it is a really extraordinary performance. Aaron Johnson also holds his own amongst some of the finest actors in Britain. But there is no getting away from the fact that his physiology is far too boisterous to capture the character of one of music's most geeky-looking icons.

Perhaps the most surprising thing is how traditional the structure and aesthetic of the film are.

Sam Taylor Wood has left her artistic sensibilities at home, and concentrated on making a film that seems more like a testament to her mentor and friend, Anthony Minghella, than a video installation. There are flashbacks to early-childhood which employ some interesting editing devices and unusual lighting, reminiscent of the legendary dream sequence in Bunuel's Los Olvidados, but aside from that the film looks more like Diner than Performance.

The script is beautifully written; the relationships between Mimi, Julia, and John are well crafted and natural and there is really no need to have any strong feelings for John Lennon or The Beatles whatsoever to enjoy this film. Indeed, you are never especially conscious of the fact that this is supposed to be John Lennon. It is only when we meet Paul and George that we are reminded, and even then it is short-lived. This is not a biopic in the mould of Walk The Line or Ray, it is the story of a troubled childhood and a determined and strong-minded young man who uses his love of music to overcome a bitter and uncomfortable domestic past.





## SAMSON AND DELILAH

#### DIRECTED BY WARWICK THORNTON STARRING ROWAN MCNAMARA. MARISSA GIBSON. MITJILI GIBSON & SCOTT THORNTON RELEASED TBC

Samson spends his days sniffing petrol, avoiding his older brother, and following Delilah around their battered desert settlement. Delilah spends her days caring for her ageing grandmother, and ignoring the annoying boy who keeps following her around. They are tired, bored young people with no hopes or dreams, but when her grandmother dies, this odd couple steal the village truck and head for the big city. Their adventures amongst city life are often upsetting but there is a simple bond between the pair that cannot be broken. This is a very unusual love story, it is awkward, silent and unromantic, but it is also intriguing, utterly absorbing and subtly but undeniably funny and affectionate.





## **SERGIO**

#### **DIRECTED BY GREG BARKER RELEASED TBC**

According to filmmaker Greg Barker, Sergio Vieira De Mello is "the most famous man you've never heard of". He was a globally adored humanitarian who guided East Timor to a peaceful autonomy, and he must be the only person in politics referred to by his first name alone. In 2003, Sergio was killed in a suicide bomb in Baghdad while working as the UN Special Envoy to Iraq. This film is a docu-drama

account of his final hours, narrated largely by the two US army reserves who tried to rescue him. It is a deeply upsetting yet somehow hopeful tale. One of the reserves, Willim von Zehle, sums this up accidentally, but succinctly; death is never easy or positive, but to die in a way that inspires hope in others, and immortalises your character in life, is a precious and rare thing.





# **KICKS**

#### DIRECTED BY LINDY HEYMANN STARRING KERRIE HAYES. NICHOLA BURLEY & JAMIE DOYLE RELEASED TBC

Nicole is a lonely girl from a poor family, Jasime is a WAG wannabe with a rich daddy. The only thing they have in common is an obsession with Liverpool midfielder Lee Cassidy. The girls meet at the training ground, and their bond tightens as they sneak into VIP nightclubs and apartment blocks to catch a glimpse of Lee. The story seems to be about the potential for

friendship to spring up in the most unlikely of places but then the girls decide to kidnap Cassidy and force him at gunpoint to stay at the club after reports he is leaving.

This is an absurd and insincere turn of events that destroys the emotional sincerity and the uplifting tone underlying the rest of the once promising film.







## **WAH DO DEM**

DIRECTED BY SAM FLEISCHNER & BEN CHASE STARRING SHAUN BONES. NORAH JONES. KEVIN BEWERSDORF. MARK GIBBS & CARL BRADSHAW RELEASED TBC

Max is a Brooklyn kid with messy hair, an American Apparel hoodie, and a pair of lime green Ray Bans permanently attached to his face.

When his girlfriend dumps him, he heads off on their romantic Caribbean cruise alone. He is the only loner on the ship, and the only passenger under the age of 65, but this is nothing compared to the trouble he gets into when he reaches Jamaica. When his wallet is stolen, Max is forced to embark on a long and fraught journey to the US Embassy in Kingston, a journey that takes

him through dangerous townships, football obsessed gangs of teenagers, an evening spent celebrating Obama's election victory in a shack bar, and a terrifying ordeal with a knife-wielding youth. Shaun Bones is a perfect balance of heroic resilience and defeated self-pity and the guerrilla aesthetic of the film helps to make this a 'slacker' hit.





## TRASH HUMPERS

#### DIRECTED BY HARMONY KORINE STARRING RACHEL KORINE. BRIAN KOTZUR. CHRIS GANTRY. CHARLES EZELL & TRAVIS NICHOLSON RELEASED TBC

Trash Humpers follows a trio of geriatric perverts who butcher innocent people and teach a primary school student to crush doll's skulls. Korine doesn't want us to feel empathy for these characters, nor does he make any effort to explore them. Shot like

a chaotic home video: there is no semblance of realism, and no attempt to make the film aesthetically attractive. The three characters are an unsettling mix; the power and virility of young adults mixed with the naïveté and irresponsibility of small

children, all wrapped up in the decaying cadavers of the elderly. There is no denying that this is another thoroughly engrossing, if brutal, film from the eternally indescribable Harmony Korine.



# LEBANON

# DIRECTED BY SAMUEL MAOZ STARRING YOAV DONAT, ITAY TIRAN, OSHRI COHEN, MICHAEL MOSHONOV, ZOHAR STRAUSS, REYMOND AMSAI FM & DIIDII TASSA

#### RELEASED APRIL 9 2010 (UK) TBC 2010 (USA)

Lebanon tells the story of four young Israeli soldiers, barely out of their teens, who are forced together to operate a tank as the First Lebanon War begins. It is an incredibly ambitious and difficult project, and one that has allowed director Samuel Maoz to create a veritable cinematic masterpiece. Waltz with Bashir employed a vast range of techniques (animation, documentary, non-narrative interviews, etc) to deal with the emotions and psychological issues created by the same war, but Lebanon never leaves the damp, explosive confines of the tank, and uses this claustrophobic microcosm to explore the power-struggles, crippling moral torment and emotional anguish that defined this horrific event in world history.

Herzl, the headstrong loader, Shmulik, the timid gunner, Assi, the hesitant commander, and Yigal, the scared, 'momma's boy' driver, make up the tank's crew. They are clearly from different Israeli backgrounds (at least in terms of wealth and education) and there is some resentment between Herzl and Assi over who should be in charge. We join the story as the crew is ordered to cross the border into Lebanon and block a dusty road over night. The following morning, when a car approaches and refuses to stop, they are ordered to blow up the car. Shmulik refuses to do so, and as a result some troops in their battalion are killed. A few minutes later another truck appears, and Jamil (the battalion commander) doesn't bother with a warning but simply orders Shmulik to shoot. Shmulik overcomes his anxiety and blows the truck up, but and it turns out to be an innocent chicken farmer, who is left crawling across the dusty ground with his entrails hanging out. Thus the tone is set for a truly raw and unapologetic look at the horrors of modern warfare.

The battalion moves across villages and areas of countryside that have already been decimated by Israeli air strikes, but the rubble

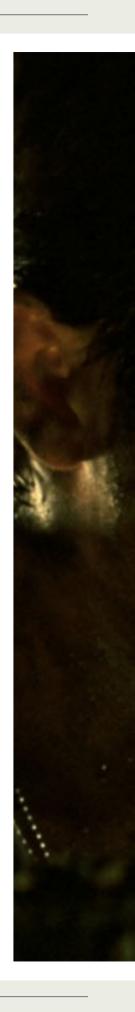
provides ample cover for the legions of Lebanese troops still trying to protect their land. Through Shmulik's cross-haired peephole we see small gun battles breaking out, resulting in deaths on all sides (Israeli and Lebanese troops, and innocent civilians). And when we turn back into the tank and see the effects this brutality is having on it's beleaguered and devastated crew, we realize that a soldier is just an innocent civilian in khaki uniform.

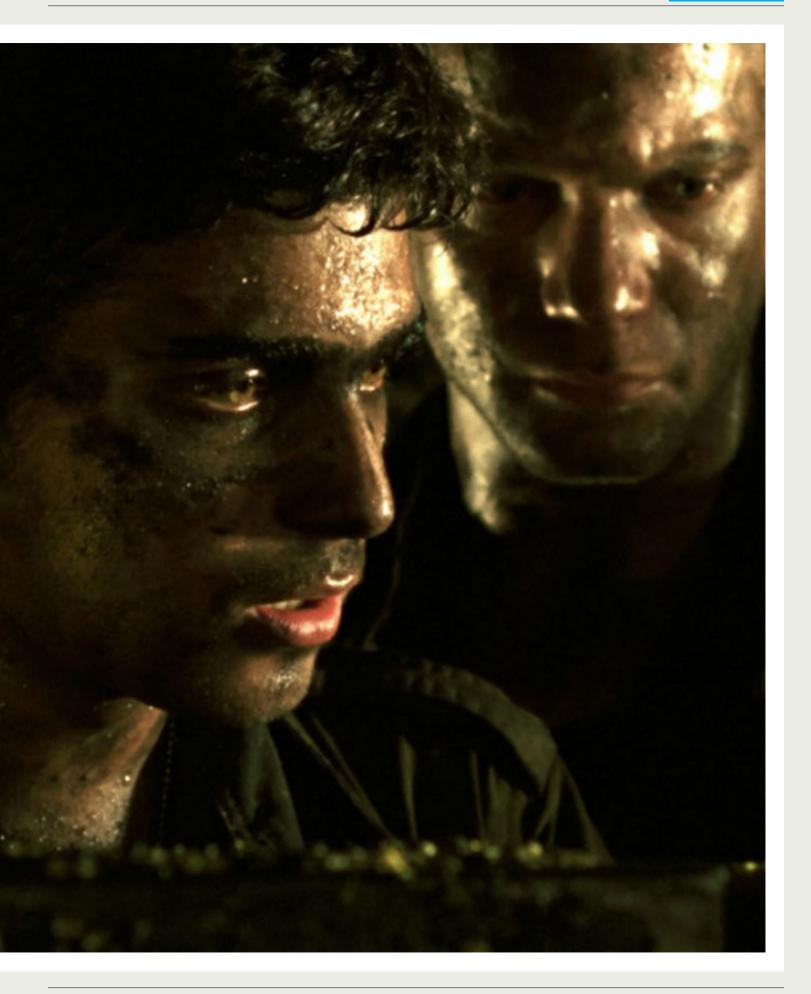
When the tank breaks down, the crew seems relieved at the prospect of being airlifted out of the warzone, but orders from above explain that they cannot be reached because they are too deep into enemy territory. The tank crew is then left completely alone, save for one maverick gangster and a captured enemy soldier, to find their way out of this hellish and unforgiving world.

There may be nothing especially surprising about the underlying message of this film; this is a cathartic exercise for Maos, who was forced to fight in the Lebanese war himself, and the film is unremittingly negative about the concept of war and the effect it has on those involved. But while such criticism may be an obvious position to take, it is still an infinitely fascinating and complex one that even Sun Tzu and Wilfred Owen were unable to solve, and Maoz has found an original and ensnaring way of investigating his own feelings about war. The relationships between these four troops - the forced machismo, the unspoken dependency, the choking back of tears through angry tirades - are so real and engaging.

But what all of this really boils down to is the setting. This film would not have been possible without the inspired decision to set it entirely inside the tank and it is this that elevates this film into the ranks of memorable, must-see cinema. Aesthetically, the claustrophobia and stuffy, menacing dankness of it are represented perfectly, it is exactly what you wish Das Boot had looked like. In terms of narrative, the relationships between the characters are perfectly conceived, performed, and captured. The naïveté, camaraderie, loneliness, and vulnerability are constantly written across the faces of the characters; and we can never turn away or take a step back, we are never more than a few inches away from this disturbing reality.









# A SERIOUS MAN

DIRECTED BY JOEL & ETHAN COEN STARRING MICHAEL Stuhlbarg, Richard Kind, Sari Wagner Lennick, Fred Melamed. Aaron Wolff & Adam Arkin

#### RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) NOVEMBER 20 (UK)

Larry Gopnik (another inspired character name from the men that brought you Dude Lebowski and Barton Fink) might be the least fortunate man ever to walk God's earth. He is a quiet professor at an unassuming Midwestern university, and he lives an uneventful and abstinent life with his seemingly happy family. Things begin to unravel after a misunderstanding with a curt and menacing Korean exchange student leads to Larry accidentally accepting a bribe. Shortly after, Larry's rotund and explosive wife reveals that she is leaving him, although she can't explain why. The quietly spoken Larry is easily muscled out of his own home by her over-bearing and infuriatingly calm new lover, and he is forced to move into a crumbling

motel with his parasitic brother.

His children seem completely apathetic to his removal from the family home, and to make matters worse, somebody is sending anonymous letters to the university accusing Larry of moral turpitude. Larry faces all of these catastrophic events with an appalled expression and a stuttering whine.

He is a wonderfully pathetic character and watching Larry desperately cling onto the fragments of his life is like watching Woody Allen trying to hold on to Annie Hall. He reluctantly agrees to visit a series of Rabbis, all of whom are completely incapable of helping Larry, sold with his range of bizarre 21st century problems.

After an astounding, critically acclaimed literary adaptation, and a raucous screwball comedy, the Coen brother's have returned to a more familiar location, middle America, and a more personal protagonist, a brow-beaten middle-aged man with terrible luck. But this is by no means a regression on their part, it is simply a more personal and easy-going film than their previous few outings.

The Coens have a knack for creating faultlessly manicured structures; even in a film as seemingly lackadaisical and character driven as this, there is still a series of set-ups and pay-offs that harks back the Lebowski years. Their sense of timing and self-deprecating humour also comes to the fore in this film.

Michael Stuhlbarg is superb as Larry. While the Coen brothers can always be relied upon to create great characters and stories, it is still down to the individual actor to deliver these slightly manic and confused creations into the real world, and Stuhlbarg is faultless in this regard. Larry is just as rounded a character as Jerome Lundegaard Jeffrey Lebowski; he is a simple man, and a serious one, who can't laugh at himself or view his life from a different perspective.

He is trapped in his tiny world, where everything has been decimated, and even when he is forced out of his home, he only manages to go down the road to a local motel. He is bumbling fool, and he speaks to the bumbling fool in all of us.



## DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME

#### DIRECTED BY DAVID MORRISSEY STARRING BROUGH & HELEN ELIZABETH RELEASED TRC

David, a "twenty something London lad", is on his way to Liverpool to surprise a girl he barely knows. She gives him the cold shoulder, but after a night of drinking and sleeping rough he meets the gentle but feisty Tina. The awkward couple stroll around a grey and windswept Liverpool for the rest of the day, relieved to confess their hopes and foibles to a complete stranger. There is something faintly charming about the way the story is approached; but the uninspiring direction, a few poor performances, and the clichéridden script make this a dull and lifeless film. Helen Elizabeth is the saving grace.



EDITOR'S NOTE: YOU CAN FIND REVIEWS FOR THE WHITE RIBBON, FANTASTIC MR FOX ,THE INFORMANT!, PRECIOUS & PAPER HEART IN FAN THE FIRE ISSUE 26 - NOVEMBER 2009, AVAILABLE FROM OUR WEBSITE AT FANTHEFIREMAGAZINE.COM



# **WE LIVE IN PUBLIC**

#### DIRECTED BY ONDI TIMONER RELEASED OUT NOW

This energetic documentary charts the rise and fall of one of the most iconic 'dot.com kids' of the early '90s, Josh Harris. After founding Pseudo.com, the first internet TV station, whose studio in Manhattan was compared to Warhol's Factory, Harris became a very young, very wayward, multi-millionaire. He began hosting huge parties with supermodels, bands, and limitless amounts of drugs and alcohol; and it wasn't long before his mental frailty began to show.

In 1999 Harris sank millions of dollars into the creation of an underground community, named Quiet, in a basement in New York. Inside the community he set up hundreds of live-feed video cameras to record every movement in the building, and hooked them up to a

75-channel private TV controller so that everybody in the community could watch each other. Quiet was like a cross between THX 1138 and Charles Manson cult, there were drugs, guns, sex and debauchery, and it is this section that really recommends the film.

Timoner was an inhabitant of Quiet, becoming a lifelong friend of Harris, and the film goes on to explore his disastrous attempts to stream his life, 24-hours a day, on a website, an experiment that only served to further dilapidate his frail mental state. While showing his life in an honest light, Timoner also shows how 'ahead- of-his-time' Harris really was. Quiet is a perfect representation of the Facebook/ smart phone generation where we all sit around in our defined spaces (our 'walls' or 'pods') staring at each other but without ever really connecting.





# THE BOX

#### DIRECTED BY RICHARD KELLY STARRING CAMERON DIAZ, JAMES MARSDEN, Frank Langella, James Rebhorn, Holmes Osborne, Sam Oz Stone, Gillian Jacobs. Celia Weston & Lisa Wyatt

#### RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) DECEMBER 4 (UK)

With the fantastical media picking up on The Box's relatively low domestic box office performance, and reported public review cards scoring the film as the 'worst ever' to be released, coupled with 2012's remarkable opening weekend, The Box is a shining beacon of creativity that is sadly being pushed further and further into the distance.

From the director of Donnie Darko, and to a forgettable extent, Southland Tales, audiences should have expected something, and forgive the pun, out of the box with Richard Kelly's latest foray onto the silver screen. A master at creating scenarios within which his mysterious narratives develop, in The Box, the lives of a young family start to unravel after the simple delivery of a package.

Left on the doorstep of Norma (Diaz) and Arthur Lewis (Marsden) with only a brief note, Arlington Steward (Langella) arrives the next day to make them a once in a lifetime offer. Unwrapping the parcel to reveal a mysterious button unit device, Steward gives the couple a key to unlock the unit's cover and reveal a button inside, which if they push, will mean receipt of \$1m, a great deal of money in The Box's 1970s setting, but also the death of a person whom they do not know. Some hours later, the button is pushed and the money received, but Norma and Arthur soon live to regret the decision as the ever present Steward appears to throw their life into emotional, and even physical, turmoil.

Based on the concept in a short story by Richard Matheson, while Kelly borrows the starting point, he soon takes The Box into his complicated framework of dead-ends, inquisitive narration and a free-thinking plot. The Box is ambitious and develops in a non-linear fashion that means it is somewhat unsurprising public reaction has been mixed. Donnie Darko and Southland Tales were undoubtedly small releases, finding a cult following on DVD, but set for a wide release, and backed by a big Hollywood studio, Kelly certainly reigned in his thinking to produce a more digestible experience, while still keeping everything that makes his best work so breathtaking.

If the general movie going public can't digest a film offers anything more than the basic 3-act

predictable structure, that's a problem with a now largely lazy audience. The Box is undoubtedly a genre film, and we should be celebrating its release scale and praising Warner Bros. for backing it.

Some strands of the story will appear confusing upon the first watch and others seem to have little relevance to the plot, but such are elements to delve into on repeat viewings, and there will certainly be a highly anticipated director's cut somewhere down the line. The scale of the plot keeps audiences guessing and Kelly's refusal to telegraph the plotline from the opening scene should be applauded.

Beyond Kelly's great vision as a writer and director, Frank Langella gives a fantastic performance as the unnervingly assured Arlington Steward. Though at times his powerful voice delves into Saw territory, he steals the show from an adequate James Marsden and likeable Cameron Diaz, accent et al, providing an all-important backbone to the expansive plot.

Arguably, however, Arcade Fire's breathtaking score brings even more to the film. Though it won't necessarily works as a standalone piece, like other great scores, the Canadian band's wonderfully sinister accompaniment gives the film an overpowering sense of dread, in sync perfectly with Kelly's vision, and will make you feel thoroughly unnerved about the impending unfortunate events.

No-one will deny that Kelly's Donnie Darko is a modern masterpiece and while The Box might not top his finest creation, it certainly proves his work is back up there with it. Some of the scenes, especially the wedding rehearsal dinner, as good as anything he's done in the past. From the subtly devilish side-characters to eerie quirks and touches, Kelly truly envelopes you in his vision, but marketed as a Cameron Diaz film, rather than 'the next film from the director of Donnie Darko', it's no wonder audiences left the theatre a little perplexed, mis-informed about the power-play before them.

The Box certainly isn't without its problems and Kelly's social analysis on our selfish culture perhaps doesn't work quite as well as intended but the single viewing frustrations are so easily overlooked as the plot, mystery and overpowering tone make it impossible not to be swept away by the narrative.

The Box has all the mystery and suspense of Donnie Darko but a story more digestible for a wider audience, giving away more throughout the film, while maintaining the mystique of the plot and if you can go in with an open mind, and be willing to take risks in a plot that attempts to go beyond the standard Hollywood filmmaking, you'll get a great deal out of it.





# THE GIRLFRIEND EXPERIENCE

DIRECTED BY STEPHEN SODERBERGH STARRING SASHA GREY, Chris Santos, Philip Eytan, T. Colby Trane, Vincent Del-Lacera. David Levien. Mark Jacobson & Rob Stein

#### RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) DECEMBER 4 (UK)

Chelsea (Grey) is a 'smoky-eyed', high-class escort in New York City. She charges rich businessmen thousands of dollars, by the hour, for her company, but it isn't the sex that they are paying for, they could go to any old hooker for that, it's the 'girlfriend experience' she offers. Chelsea lives in a sumptuous, open-plan apartment with her real boyfriend Chris (Santos), a personal trainer who is supportive of her career choice. Chelsea seems fairly content, but the life she has chosen is a transitory and hollow one, and she is clearly incapable of finding any real peace or solidity.

And that, in a nutshell, is the premise of The Girlfriend Experience; it is an opportunity to observe the emotional vicissitudes of one of life's most mysterious creatures, that elusive succubus, the 'woman of the night'. It is certainly an interesting project and there is a lot to commend it in the pace and tone of the film, the performances of the leading players, both of whom are novices, and the way these performances are expertly captured by Soderbergh and Peter Andrews. Unfortunately the film doesn't seem to add up to the sum of its parts. The world of escorting might seem to be both glamorous and romantic, yet sordid and guttural, but Soderbergh is determined to avoid these polarities and concentrates on the mundane loneliness of this world. Unfortunately, in so doing, he creates a cold and detached film that fails to really grip the viewer or persuade us that this is a

story we should care about.

In between clients. Chelsea meets with friends, fellow escorts, and business advisors, many of whom are actually clients, in a bid to develop her business and become more successful. She gives a sleazy but influential sex-critic a 'free sample' in return for favourable reviews and business opportunities, but his review turns out to be a stab in the back and she also notices some of her clients cavorting with other, more fresh-faced, escorts. Chris is also trying to become more financially independent by taking on a management position at a gym, though the economic downturn makes this extremely difficult. These stressful tribulations are clearly having an effect on their relationship, as Chris seems to be the only person who cant get a 'girlfriend experience' out of Chelsea. When Chelsea meets a mysterious and charming new client, a screenwriter from LA, she decides to go away with him for the weekend, despite Chris's protestations. With their relationship in tatters, Chris goes of for a 'boys trip' to Vegas with a rich client, before Chelsea, in the end, is stood up.

The lead performance is certainly worthy of merit. Sasha Grey is a fascinating young woman; a veritable legend of the porn industry with a passion for the French New Wave, Oscar Wilde, and transgressive art. She has been featured in radical fashion shoots, including artwork for a Smashing Pumpkins album, and was listed in Rolling Stone Magazine's Hot List 2009. It is fair to say then, that Grey is not your average porn star This is her feature film debut, and it should be noted that she is a porn star playing an escort, so she probably didn't have to dig too deep into her Stanislavski handbook, but she manages to come across as completely controlled, while on the few occasions that high emotion are required, she is quite breathtaking.

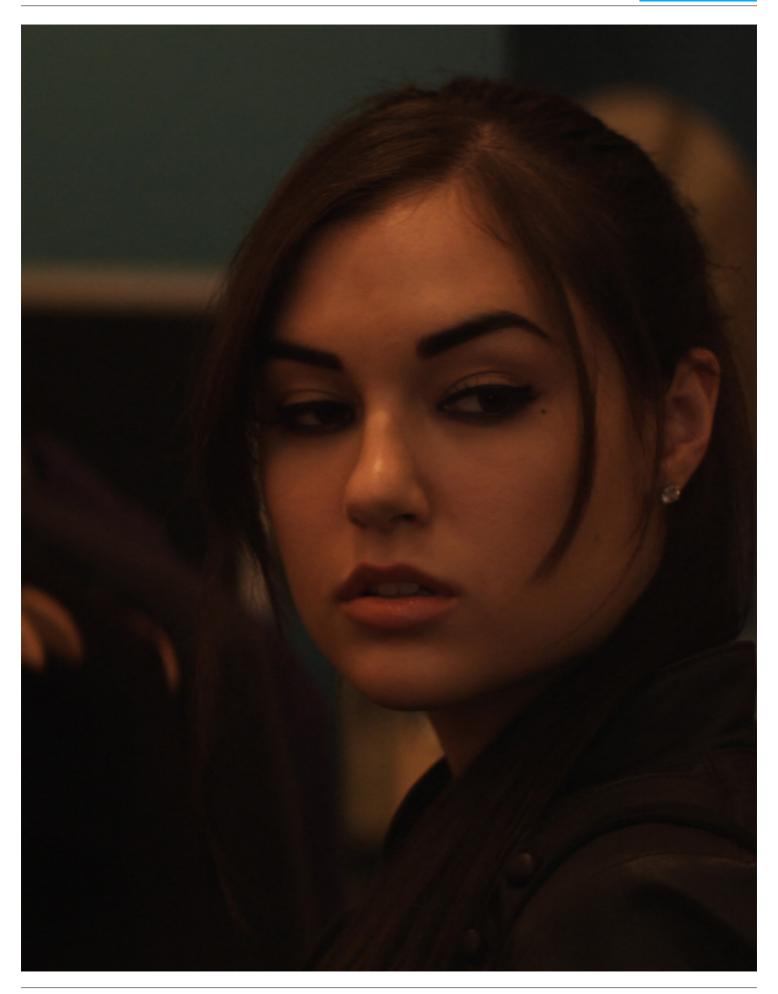
The look of the film is effortlessly effective but surely nobody doubts Soderbergh's intimate understanding

of the language of film. The Girlfriend Experience carries a sort of documentary aesthetic but it remains subtle and unobtrusive throughout. Soderbergh knows exactly how long to allow the actors to improvise, and how long to leave the camera rolling. Awkward silences never grow too awkward and composition choices are juggled meaning this never looks uncinematic.

The film is told through a fractured narrative, although this is never really forced upon us either. This fracturing works because it forces us to accept the circularity and repetitiveness of Chelsea's world. Chelsea thinks she is on a linear path, and she is heading for some magnificent future where everything will be ok; but she is a tragic figure, incapable of recognizing her own flaws; she is destined to stumble through the same mistakes and uncertainties throughout her troubled life. The way this hopelessness is weaved into the narrative should probably feel like a triumph for the film; but unfortunately it is not a 'hopelessness' filled with pathos or tragedy, it is cold and empty and that doesn't rouse any emotions in the audience.

The story occurs in the lead up to the 2008 Presidential Election, and also in the midst of the economic downturn, and Chelsea and Chris are both in the business of listening to rich executives talk for one hour at a time. Soderbergh mistakenly saw this as a clever and interesting way to ram some fairly obvious and painfully obsolete economic and political drivel down our throats. While films about Obama and the economic crash will someday be essential, there had not been enough time to consider them as historic events when Soderbergh was making this film. Furthermore, the decision to spend so long listening to coke-sniffing, whore-loving executives talk about the abomination of higher taxes for the rich removes any hope of Soderbergh getting to know his characters, let alone taking the time to introduce them to us.





# TEN MINUTES WITH 'THE DIRTIEST GIRL IN THE WORLD' ALEX BRAMMER INTERVIEWS SASHA GREY

At 6pm on Monday November 16th I was contentedly enjoying my £3.60 shredded duck ho fun from the Noodle King on Bethnal Green Road with a friend when I received a phone call from our editor-in-chief, Sam Bathe. "Can you make it to the premiere of Steven Soderbergh's new film, and interview the lead, porn star-turned-actress Sasha Grey?" An hour later I was in a taxi on my way to the BFI Southbank to see The Girlfriend Experience after the red carpet, and speak with the lady in question.

So what had I learnt of Sasha Grey in my sketchy sixty minutes of online research? Born Marina Ann Hantzis on March 14th 1988 in North Highlands, California, she moved to LA in 2006 to start a career in pornography and apparently wasted little time in doing so. In January 2007 she won the award for 'Best Three Way Sex Scene' and 'Best Group Scene' at the AVN adult movie awards, an achievement she bettered the following year, receiving the prestigious 'Female Performer of the Year' award as well as the award for 'Best Oral Sex Scene' for her part in 'Babysitters' in which she performs oral sex on four men. Sasha Grey represents herself in the business via her agency LA Factory Girls, and has recently setup her own production company Grey Scale Entertainment, nevermind being recently labelled last April as "The Reigning Princess of Porn" by Rolling Stone magazine. It was dawning on me that the woman I was about to meet was not simply some porn star,

but the porn star of the moment. As if that wasn't enough, Rolling Stone also described her as 'the dirtiest girl in the world'. Quite a claim.

**Fan the Fire**: So how did the collaboration with Steven Soderbergh come about? Were you a fan before?

**Sasha Grey:** Yeah, I've been a fan for a long time so when that opportunity presented itself I was very very excited. His writer Brian Koppelman, both he and Steven read an article I did...

**FtF:** The article for LA Magazine?

**SG:** Yeah, and they should pay me for mentioning them so many times.

**FtF:** Well I mentioned them so maybe they should pay me.

**SG:** (laughs) You know I've tried saying "I did an article for a magazine", and people say "what magazine!?" so I've even tried cutting it out, but nope, it still comes up in coversation. Yeah, so they read this article and Brian contacted me first, and he sent me a MySpace and was like "Hey, Steven wants to talk to you about casting you in his next film."

**FtF:** So he messaged you on MySpace? **SG:** Yeah, because in this article I had mentioned that at the time I was trying to check MySpace everyday and really connect with my fans because they mean everything to me, so he said yeah I wrote here because I read you check it every day.

**FtF:** That's very 21st century, he should have poked you on Facebook. New notification: Steven Soderbergh poked you...

**SG:** (laughs) I wasn't on Facebook at that time. So we set up a meeting and about a week later and I spoke to Steven for about an hour, and he told me, you know, this is the story, the film is about a high price escort, she has a live-in boyfriend, and by the end of the film she'll leave him. So that's what I knew at that point.

**FtF:** And the character, Chelsea, she's in a profession where obviously she gets paid to have sex, she's very professional, very proud of what she does, very good at what she does. Did playing that role draw you to the film? Do you feel you relate to her at all through your life experiences?

**SG:** You know on the surface, we're both young independent women that are in control of our own businesses, but there really is no pride for her in the sense of her sexuality and she really isn't that sexual. She's not in touch with that side of her being. She heavily relies on Personology as this guideline to her life, and it's an excuse, something to fall back on if something goes wrong. It's a way to hide behind this veil so she doesn't have to take responsibility for any of her actions, and she's also very vain.

**FtF:** So you don't relate to that? **SG:** (laughs) No. As far as the profession of 'sex for money', she's giving more than just the sex, she has to develop an emotional attachment, a fake emotional attachment with these clients which I thankfully don't have to do. And another huge difference is I'm on camera, she's not.

**FtF:** With regard to your porn star name, I read that you originally wanted to call yourself 'Anna Karina' [after the Danish film actress/director/screenwriter], why did you decide against that name?

**SG:** Well at the time I had a list of names right...

**FtF:** What were some of the others? **SG:** I can't remember, I actually have a list somewhere, but the others weren't real people, I'd take variations of somebody's first name and somebody's last name and combine those. And Anna Karina was the only one that was a real person, and I took this list to my agent at the time, and he thought I was talking about the novel [Anna Karenina by Tolstoy], and he looked at this list and was like "these are all too pretentious, what are you doing? This is weird, don't do that", and he didn't realise I was talking about the actress not the novel, but I decided to take his advice on that one anyway.

FtF: So where did Sasha Grey come

**SG:** Actually to add to that, he also said that you need a name that when you Google search it, not a lot of hits come up; its original and you can develop something on your own. For Sasha Grey, Sasha is one of the singers from the [German Industrial Rock] band KMFDM, and I love KMFDM so I chose the name of one of the singers. And Grey is for 'Dr Kinsey's Scale of Sexuality', commonly referred to as 'Grey's Scale'.

FtF: From the Anna Karina name and the LA magazine interview you're obviously an indie film fan. Did you always want to get into cinema via adult films? Or did it just happen naturally? **SG:** No, for me acting was more of an extra-curricular activity where my mom said I need to do something, you know "you're not playing sports! You're not in girl scouts! You need to do something," so she had me start in school rather than in theatre right away, then I started classes outside of school, like community theatres.

FtF: What was your favourite per-

formance from that time? Is there a school play that sticks out?

**SG:** I don't want to say... (laughs) OK I'll give you a funny one; Elly May Clampett from Beverly Hillbillies.

FtF: Nice.

**SG:** Yeah, that was one of my very first ones. Going back to your original question, it was something I enjoyed but never would have thought of pursuing as a career.

**FtF:** Is there going to be any more acting in the future?

**SG:** I'm shooting a film in Paris in December, called Life, and then I shoot another film in March, it's actually a London based company but we're shooting it in California. My book will also be coming out at the end of first quarter.

**FtF:** Is that biographical?

**SG:** No, I'm too young for that.

FtF: Apparently not, there's this English celebrity Katie Price...

SG: Who?

**FtF:** She's this glamour model who's released three autobiographies in the last four years.

SG: What?

**FtF:** Sorry, what's your book about? **SG:** It's a sex philosophy photography book, so it's kind of like a coffee table book that has a little more meat to it, no pun intended.

And with that, my time with one of the biggest adult stars in the world was over. I had to be honest, I'd envisioned the interview and my line of questioning taking a different, more innuendo-riddled route to that of chatting about Katie Price, Facebook, and school plays, but at the time, it didn't seem appropriate, nor professional. Plausibly, in different surroundings to a movie premiere at the BFI Southbank in Waterloo, the dialogue could have flowed differently, but most probably it was down to the interviewee herself. Sasha Grey was eloquently spoken, sophisticated, and funny, the polar opposite to the stereotype of a porn star. She was, however, still fiercely proud

of what she has achieved.

I later read the following on her MySpace page; "I am a woman who strongly believes in what she does - it is time that our society comes to grips with the fact that "normal" people (women especially) enjoy perverse sex." Indeed it is conceivable that some would consider Sasha Grey to be a new kind of feminist for the 21st century. Showing that someone can be a porn star whilst still be sophisticated, cultured, and well, 'normal', is in some way an attack on one of the few remaining taboos in mainstream culture - sex. Money is constantly poured into Hollywood to create new ways for people to die in films, and explicit drug usage has been on show in mainstream cinema for decades, yet explicit, what would be considered pornographic sex scenes, are extremely rare, almost nonexistent in the mainstream film industry. Some would argue that they're not truly necessary, but are they any less necessary than showing someone getting their head blown off, or injecting heroin? It's an interesting debate.

I was actually surprised by the lack of a sex scene in The Girlfriend Experience, it appears as though rather than attempting to induce more sex into mainstream cinema, Sasha Grey, and the writers, wanted to attack the issue from the opposite end by emulating controversial directors such as Catherine Breillat. Breillat had a more artistic take on pornography than the conventional I'm-here-to-fix-the-boiler set-up; and as I mentioned previously, Grey has recently set-up her own production company, presumably with this in mind.

It is doubtful that explicit sex, such as that seen in pornographic movies, will ever get as much play as drugs or violence in mainstream cinema but it is conceivable that a lot of people's minds could be broadened on the subject over the coming years. If this happens it is likely to be the new breed of porn star, such as Sasha Grey, that will the ones that make the breakthrough. 🔮

## 2012

#### DIRECTED BY ROLAND EMMERICH STARRING JOHN CUSACK, Amanda Peet, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Thandie Newton, Tom McCarthy, Danny Glover, Liam James & Morgan Lily

#### **RELEASED OUT NOW**

Plastered everywhere from the sides of buses, to building-sized advertising hoardings and imaginatively integrated underground walkways, there's no escaping the release of Roland Emmerich's next epic, 2012. A man so apparently obsessed with postapocolyptic Earth, in 2012, Emmerich has cut out the middle man and jumps straight to the point. There's no rampaging monster, no alien invasion, just a world that come a date mysterious predicted by the Mayan calendar, will no longer be the same again, ravaged by its own forces.

In amongst the madness, of course, Emmerich draws your attention to one family, and a disjointed one at that. Two separated parents, the mother's boyfriend, and two kids catch wind of rumours about a possible rescue mission so try to make the epic journey across the planet in an attempt to find the one possible means of salvation.

If this were the Emmerich of 20 years ago, perhaps he would have injected a passion into 2012 that would have really brought it alive, but as it is, to say his latest film is formulaic would be a gross understatement. After making his name with such great films as Godzilla and Independence Day, Emmerich has been drifting steadily downhill ever since, but with 2012 he's hit a real low point.

The film feels like a spoof and possesses everything you'd expected from a Wayans disaster movie. The story is grossly clichéd, the sheer number of car jumps over gaping ravines is unbelievably ridiculous, and on several occasions, you'll be thrown into laughter at the sheer stupidity of

the narrative and Emmerich's attempts to convey tension and emotion. 2012 has the classic moments of heroism, a speech of how we need to remember what it means to be human, a scientist who predicts it all before it happens, a government, that even after knowing what is coming, fail to plan a scheme for anyone beyond a handful of leading figures to have a chance at survival and a man outrunning molten fireballs. Played out in a serious manner, Emmerich far from pulls it off.

You could argue 2012 was always going to possess such qualities but for a man with a such a reputation, even on a big studio release, he has the power to drive the project in a new direction. On this occasion, Emmerich he didn't bother. 2012 is devout of any imagination or flair; for him especially, it feels like a paycheck, which when there's a \$200m+ budget on the table, is a gigantic kick in the teeth for the legions of talented young filmmakers who would give their right arm to helm a project like this.

For a film so reliant on CGI, 2012 needed nothing less than game-changing special effects, but the final result is sloppy. The great masses of land sliding into the sea look nice enough on the poster, but in full motion don't have the depth of realism to protect an already suffering film by the fairly early time they come into play, never mind the multiple aeroplane rides that feel like an aging video game.

Sometimes films can be awful but still a great deal of fun along the way; this isn't one of them. 90 minutes would have been long enough to endure but 2012 weighs in at 158, over two and a half hours of mindnumbingly boring 'adventure'. The plot rambles and could have been easily cut down to a digestible size as the film takes turns that don't make sense, then doubles back on itself only to trip up further, leaving unnecessary holes it fails to patch up.

Despite the horror show around them, on a whole, the acting talent do a fairly decent job. It's great to see Chiwetel Ejiofor get a role in a big studio release, and about time the talented actor got the opportunities in Hollywood to match his reputation on the indie scene.

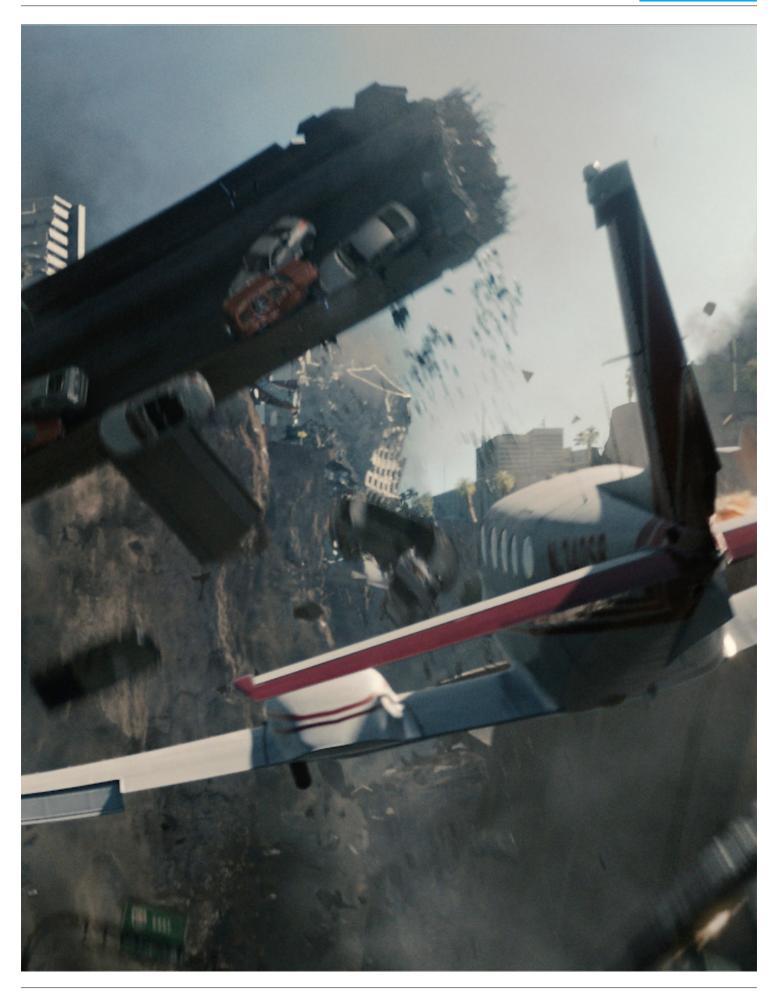
The big names in the cast can in no way save the film from falling into the ridiculous, and their characters offer absolutely nothing in terms of depth or conviction, though Woody Harrelson's wacky underground radio reporter is a pleasure to watch when he gets a few moments on screen and John Cusack is fairly inoffensive with his performance. As US Preseident, however, Danny Glover is atrocious, as bad a showing as you'll find in the last decade.

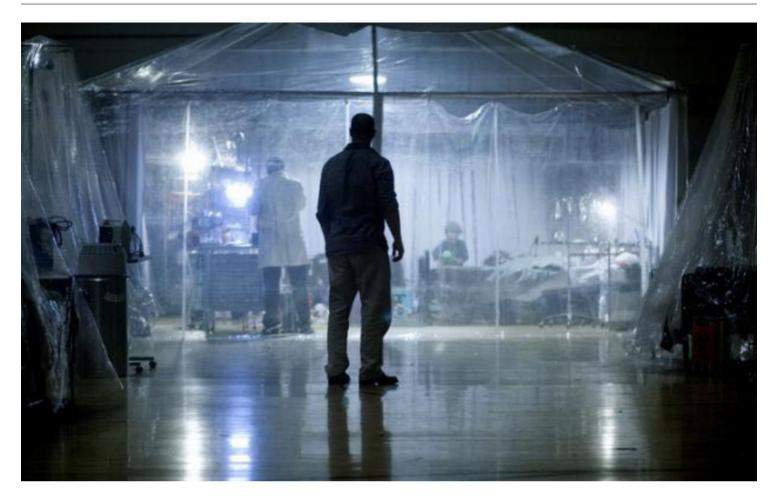
Certainly I haven't seen all of the terrible films that have every been produced in film's history, so I can't claim with real conviction that this is pushing the full all-time list, but in my fairly extensive film watching life, it's certainly in my top 5 worst ever, and no doubt will be a massive hit at the Razzies next year.

The MPAA might be declaring record profits for the industry but the forthcoming closures of a lot of the major studio's boutique labels is proof that Hollywood is on its knees. While films like Transformers 2 make extraordinary amounts at the box office, the percentage that makes it back to the majors is relatively slim, and on the whole goes to paying off the huge loans taken out to fund such bloated blockbusters.

With a budget of \$200m+, 2012 is colossal waste of money and film fans' time. Piracy might be having an impact on the current state of the market, sure, and studios certainly need to get their head around how to make the most of the digital market, but they need to first look at their own stable and put money behind projects that deserve their commitment.







## **CARRIERS**

DIRECTED BY ALEX & DAVID PASTOR STARRING CHRIS PINE. LOU TAYLOR PUCCI. PIPER PERABO, EMILY VANCAMP. CHRISTOPHER MELONI. KIERNAN SHIPKA & MARK MOSES

#### RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) DECEMBER 11 (UK)

Forming a strange late 2009 end of the world triple bill alongside 2012 and The Road, Carriers is the thriller of the pack, hoping to catch viewers off guard with a few quick scares and sumptuous visuals to keep your eyes peeled.

After a highly contagious and quick-acting virus wipes out much of the world's population, Carriers follows Brian (Pine), his girlfriend Bobby (Perabo), his brother Danny (Pucci) and Danny's friend Kate (VanCamp) as they drive across America to an isolated hotel on the coast to wait out the pandemic. With petrol and food running scarce, when they run into a father (Meloni) and his infected

daughter (Shipka), however, Brian's better, if unforgiving, judgment would see them drive on by, but in need of fuel, they picked the pair up, making the cross-country trip just that bit more complicated.

Stuck unreleased for over a year as distributor Paramount Vantage was being forcibly restructured into its bigger brother's plans, similar to 2008's Blindness, Carriers can't decide which direction it wants to take. With the visuals, feel and tone of a teen horror but the more serious undertones of a message-laden end of the world movie, it falls right inbetween.

Partly down to what will be an audience's anticipation of forthcoming scares, Carriers threatens to shock, but never pulls through, and though at first this creates a sense of tension, after a while the feeling passes. That's not to say Carriers isn't engaging, however, and in Chris Pine, cast a man who creates wonderful things from a fairly bland script.

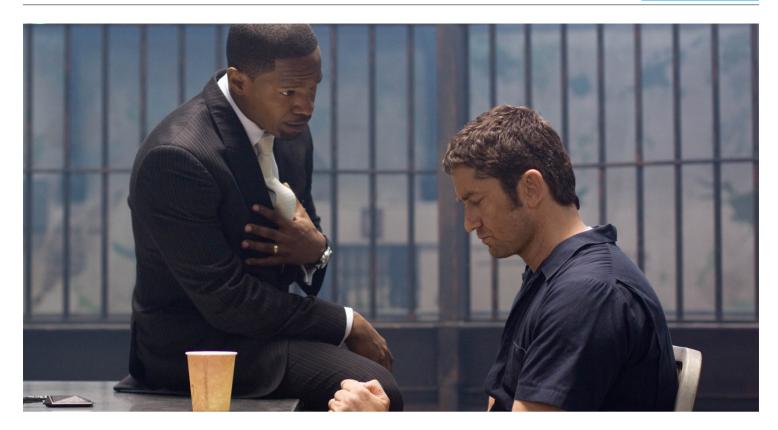
Without Pine, there's no doubt

Carriers would have struggled, but with him leading the way, and as his fellow actors bouncing of his energy and enthusiasm, it will easily hold your attention for the brisk 84 minutes.

And this is why Carriers is such a missed opportunity for writer/directors Alex and David Pastor. The film is certainly deserving of your time and is absorbing as the plot takes a somewhat expected route, but it struggles to do anything major with your attention. The production values are high but the messages about loyalty, human decency and the fight for self-survival are half-baked.

Had the intensity of Carriers been anywhere approaching 28 Days Later or The Road, we might have had something special on our hands, at least in the teen thriller genre. As it happens, it's certainly a good film, but needed a stronger vision, better direction, and the avoidance of one huge plot hole that does its best to un-do everything that came before it.





# LAW ABIDING CITIZEN

DIRECTED BY F. GARY GRAY STARRING JAMIE FOXX, GERARD Butler, Colm Meaney, Bruce McGill, Leslie Bibb, Michael Irby, Regina Hall & Christian Stolte

#### RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) NOVEMBER 27 (UK)

F. Gary Gray's Law Abiding Citizen is an odd beast. Despite a decent setup, interesting premise and good performances, it end up falling a little short of its promise, but that isn't to say it's a failure, in fact, the film is probably a lot better than you imagine it to be, and certainly leagues beyond the average mid-budget thriller.

The setup, whilst not wholly original, is quickly laid down in order for the film to walk its less well trodden paths. Gerard Butler, last seen shooting lots of endless opposing forces in Gamer, takes the joint lead as Clyde Shelton, a man whose happy family life is devastated by a pair of ruthless

and, in one case, remorseless killers. The quirks of the justice system allow the primary suspect to slip through the prison bars and out into society again, for which Clyde holds law man Jamie Foxx responsible. Nothing has been spoiled here, because this first act is simply the groundwork for what is to come, as Clyde's imminent revenge targets more than just the criminals themselves.

The film, to give credit where credit's due, sticks to its guns throughout, and throws many a curve ball at the viewer, although it has to be said that the film's third act does rather push the levels of realism, sacrificing some of it's well orchestrated shocks in favour of more orthodox audience pleasing. Tonally the film veers sharply, but mostly successfully, between gritty thrills and black humour. To this end, uncomfortable laughs are drawn out of unpleasant acts and sudden bursts of violence, although this effect somehow manages not to jar. A little less successfully, the script jumps between subtle politicising (effective) and outright preaching (not so much) which upsets the balance.

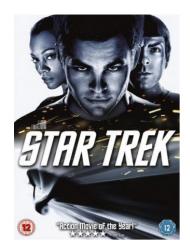
The film's ruminations on the

politics of modern law are hardly revolutionary or even particularly emotional but there is enough food for thought to ensure Clyde's vengeful quest is not simply a mindless crusade.

Kudos go to the film for its split pursuit of comedy and thrills and Law Abiding Citizen evokes one of the biggest recent jump moments this side of Paranormal Activity. Thankfully the script is given weight by decent performances from both leads, with Jamie Foxx's family man coming across quite strongly. He also gets the funniest line. Pomme-frites indeed.

The film can't seem to make up its mind whether it wants to be an audience pleasing popcorn treat or a serious, political thriller. It ends up being partly both, which was perhaps the genuine intention, though it is with varying degrees of success. It comes across as an odd concoction of Se7en and Kill Bill, only without the consistency of the former, nor the bombast of the latter. Such comparisons, though, are unfair and Law Abiding Citizen is a cut above most thrillers, managing to raise a couple of smirks, and is the best Gerard Butler film for some time.





#### STAR TREK

JJ Abrams' supremely fun reboot of the classic franchise, making the Star Trek name cool again for modern generations. Chris Pine and Zachary Ouinto make a real name for themselves and work on a sequel is already underway.

\*\*\*\* Extras \*\*\*



### **INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS**

Return to form, if largely overrated, film from Quentin Tarantino following intertwining stories in Nazioccupied France. Christoph Waltz steals the show though Brad Pitt also puts in a very entertaining performance.

\*\*\*\* Extras \*\*\*



### TRANSFORMERS 2: REVENGE OF THE FALLEN

Action-packed but disappointing sequel to the wonderful 2007 CGI-heavy picture. The plot and narrative are all over the place but it's still an entertaining film.

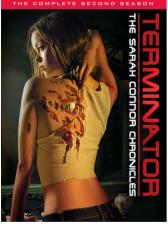
Film \*\*\*\* Extras \*\*\*



### TERMINATOR SALVATION

Action-heavy entry into the Terminator franchise, ditching the chase plotlines that served the first two so well. Assuming you don't go into Salvation with false expections, it is still entertaining.

\*\*\*\* Extras \*\*\*



### TERMINATOR: THE SARAH **CONNOR CHRONICLES: S2**

Despite a slow start, season two of the Terminator TV spin-off quickly picks up pace with great writing and superb action scenes, leaving fans hopeful of a third season.

Show ★★★★ Extras \*\*\*



### THE PROPOSAL

Average unimaginative romcom as a strict boss forces her assistant to marry her so she can gain a visa for America. You can guess the ending from the outset, making the following 108 minutes a fairly boring, predictable affair.

\*\*\*\* Extras \*\*\*



#### MOON

Duncan Jones' engrossing sci-fi debut following a space station supervisor whom after a crash in a rover vehicle. starts to see an identical copy of himself. Sure they are the same person, they're left perplexed by the situation.

\*\*\*\* Film Extras \*\*\*



### ICE AGE 3: DAWN OF THE DINOSAURS

Back to the ice age for a third time, the group have discover a dinosaur civilisation beneath the ice caps. Low-grade animation and a lazy plot harm the final outcome.

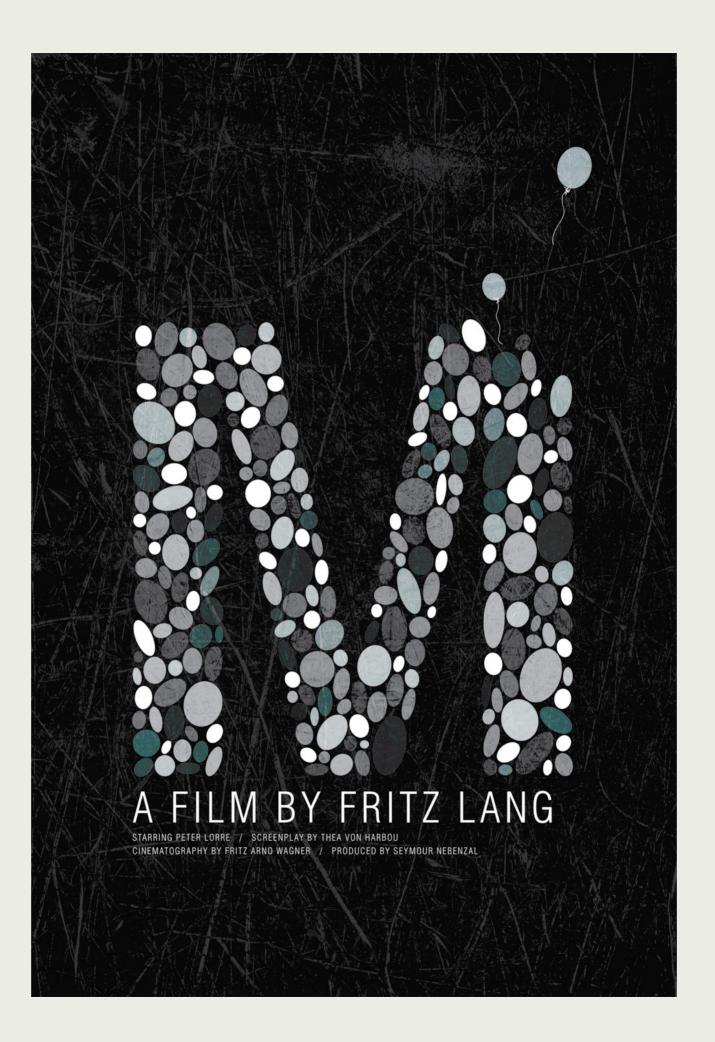
\*\*\*\* Film Extras \*\*\*



## IF ONLY STUDIOS HAD THE NERVE TO TRY SOMETHING NEW WITH THEIR PROMO CAMPAIGNS

# POSTER STRIKE

Posters Brandon Schaefer



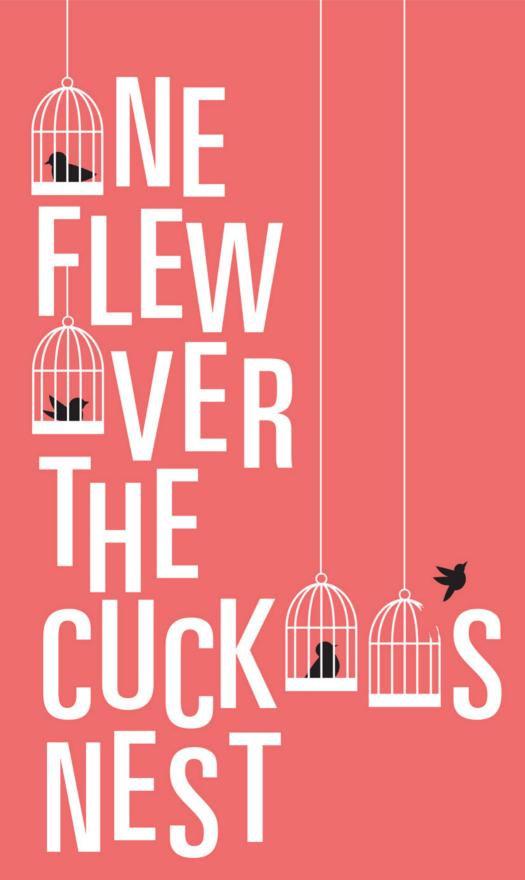


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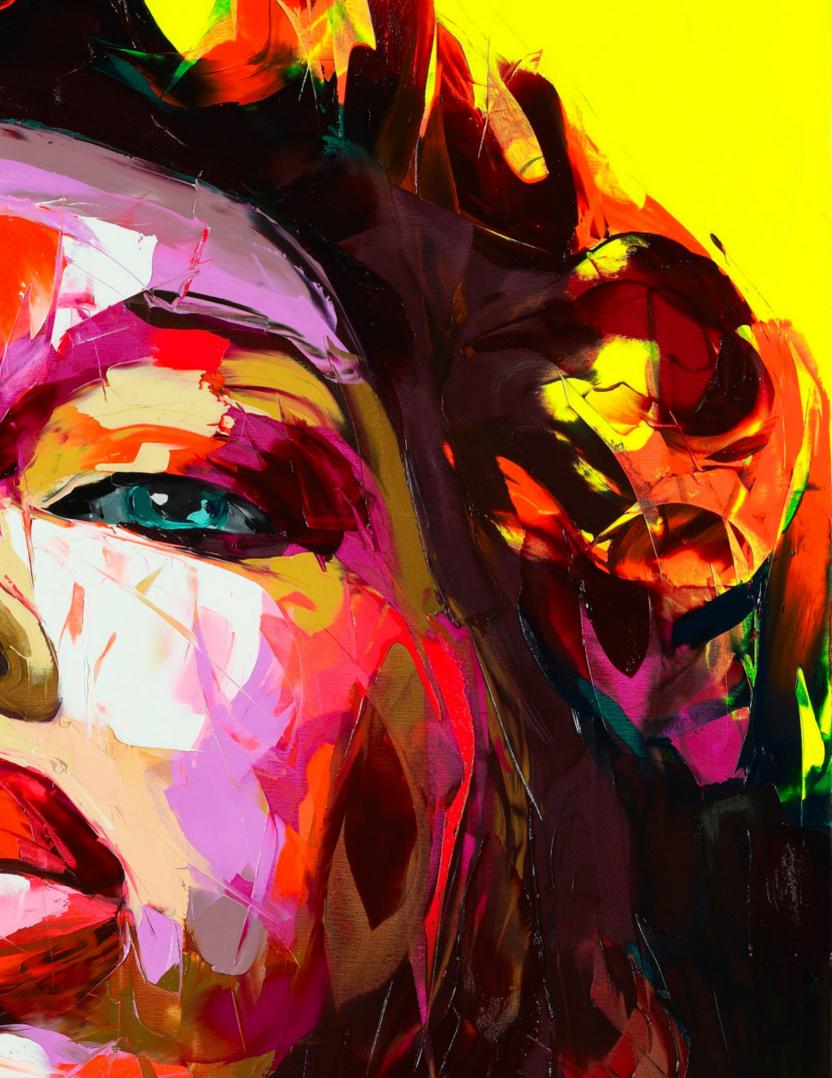


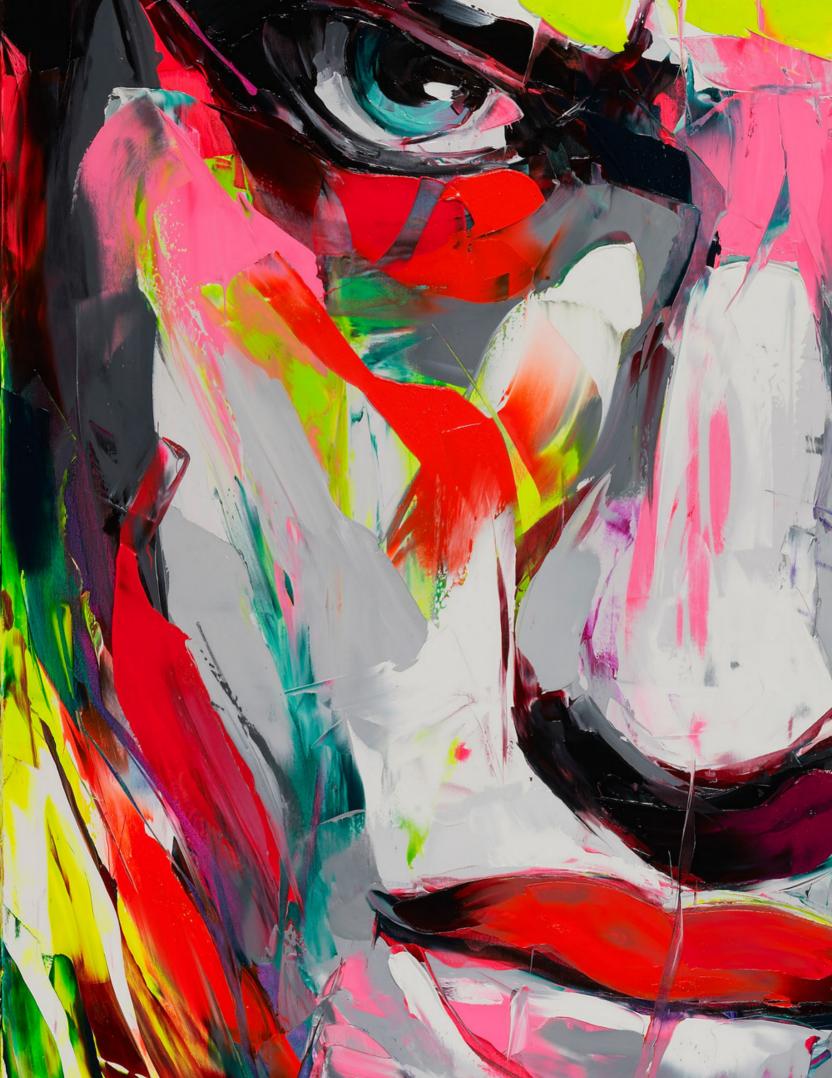


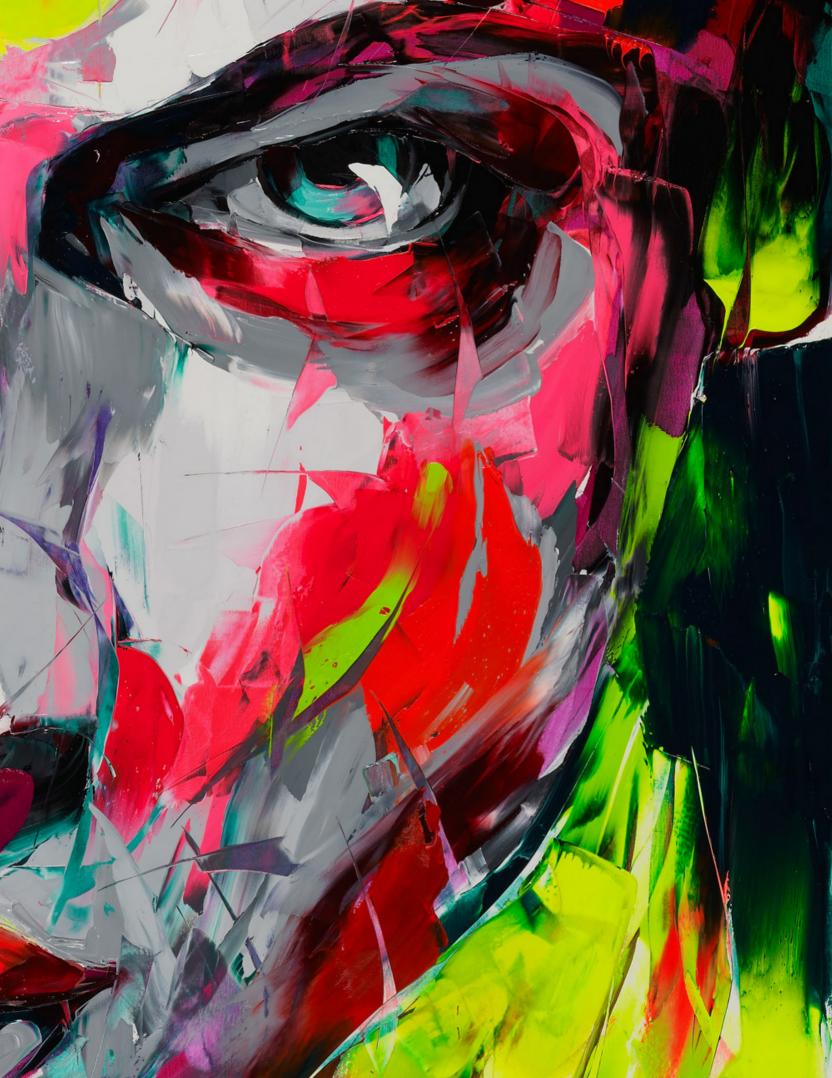














THE EMPEROR'S ARMY SCOUR PLANET EARTH TO FIND THE REBEL SCUM

# DIARY OF A STORMTROOPER

Photography Stéfan Le Dû































