

FAN T *ENTERTAINMENT* TRE

#39 // JANUARY 2011

WHITE LIES & CWK ALBUM REVIEWS

STYLE BY RORY DCS
& MIKAEL RAMIREZ

THE GREEN HORNET &
THE FIGHTER FILM REVIEWS

ART BY SLIP &
ANDREW KOLB

INTERVIEW WITH THE...

KING OF ALL GEEKS

EDGAR WRIGHT EXPLAINS WHERE
IT ALL WENT SO RIGHT AND SO
WRONG FOR SCOTT PILGRIM

OSCAR SEASON
AS THE BIG GUNS
COME OUT TO PLAY,
WHO SITS IN POLE
POSITION COME
THE 2011 ACADEMY
AWARDS

+

**SOUND
OF 2011**

THE LOWDOWN
ON THE NEW
YEAR'S HOTTEST
NAMES IN MUSIC

TOP 10s
OF 2010

**THIS IS
A HONEY-
TRAP**

RORY DCS TAKES
A DAY OFF WITH
TWO MODELS,
A CAT AND
SOME PICK'N'MIX



Flu Hard 2: Flu Harder



The turn of the year is a crucial time. For magazines, for businesses, for bands, for production companies; for everyone. As consumers set out their stall for the year ahead, with cut-backs, resolutions and new found indulgences, January is often seen as a statement of intent for the following 11 months.

We hope to be no different, and I think we've done a fairly good job with what feels like our most weighty, entertaining and artfully designed issue yet. Oh, and after the endless delays, (and yes, we mean it when we say it this time), our iPad app is coming out over the next month too.

But to be honest, it's something of a miracle this issue was even finished. With half the team waylaid by flu; most of us seemingly recovering then

struck down often a second and third time, each with quite the vengeance. We have, though, battled on.

We have great confidence 2011 holds a lot in store for **FAN THE FIRE**, and we'll be looking to pass on every ounce of excitement to you. The app is the start of it all, and boy are we looking forward to getting it into the public domain, both on the iPad, and in the Mac App Store, plus our upcoming new web reader.

That's not the end of it though, while the magazine will always be our priority, we've some other exciting projects coming up too. Development is set to ramp up on the second film we're helping to produce, our record label will be putting out its first full release, while our creative agency and digital publishing platform are going

from strength to strength as well.

The age of megalithic conglomerates ruling the media industry is certainly far from over, but now more than ever, small indies have a real chance to make a significant impact. With our publishing platform we'll be going nose-to-nose with Adobe and WoodWing, and we've an even more compelling product making a charge for the line.

We wish you all a lot of luck and success for 2011, while we'll certainly be pushing forward at breakneck speed ourselves. We definitely came of age in 2010, but 2011 is where you'll hear **FAN THE FIRE** make a proper name for ourselves.

Sam Bathe
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Get interactive, with **FAN THE FIRE** on the iPad

Check out our official app, the must-have companion to our magazine issues

Pocket power

The powerful iPad makes reading the magazine a seamless experience

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The app automatically knows when new issues become available for you to download

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Easy access to all our back issues straight from the home screen

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Updates

We've got some very exciting things planned, so stay tuned

& much more

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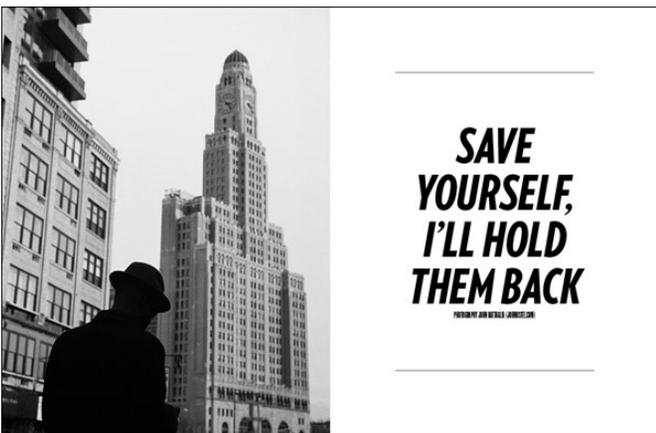
ARTWORK BY
CESAR MORENO

January 2011



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RETURNING TO RED DEAD REDEMPTION



FAST-ACTING NUROFEN



TRASHING OUR LEAST FAVOURITE FILMS AND ALBUMS OF THE YEAR



THE (JAPANESE) RELEASE OF NI NO KUNI



HOT TOPPINGS ON FROZEN YOGURT



MIDDLE BROTHER ANNOUNCING THEIR DEBUT ALBUM RELEASE



ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT



MARKS & SPENCER'S EVE'S PUDDINGS



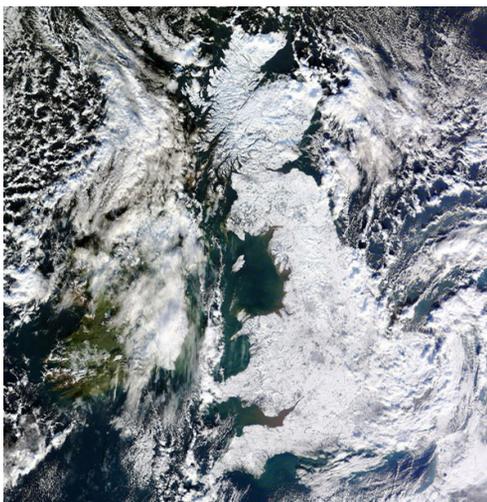
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**CYCLING IN THE
SNOW (READ: FALLING
OFF OUR BIKES)**

**HA-
TE**



**WAITING ANOTHER MONTH
FOR OSCAR FILMS TO BE
RELEASED IN THE UK**



IPHONE 4 PRICING



**POINTLESS REVIEW
EMBARGOES**



**YAHOO! EMAIL
OUTAGES**



MUSIC



SOUND OF 2011



OUR TOP 10 ALBUMS
OF 2010



ALBUM REVIEWS



PICTURED: HOLY GHOST!



BRIGHT *young* THINGS

Breaking into the music industry is a tricky game, but the bands with talent, ability and creativity seem to make it in the end, or just jump on the scene from the get-go. We preview the names you'll want to be hearing a lot more from this year. ➔

WORDS BY SAM WALKER-SMART,
TOM MOORER, LUCIA BINDING,
SAM BATHE & ROB HENNEBERRY



MIAMI HORROR (ABOVE)

“Kick-started out of a love of Roland keyboards and French house”, Miami Horror is Ben Plant’s producer project-turned-fully-blown live band, that after a couple of transitions, are easily the hottest thing due out of Australia in the coming year.

Starting the project some three years ago, after a string of high profile remixes and the release of 2008’s *Bravado* EP, Plant quickly became one of the most hyped producers in his native shores. Pnau, The Presets, and soon Datarock and Bloc Party were tapping him up as his name spread further across the planet, meaning Plant stood up and took notice; Miami Horror was a project that could have real legs, and was already going places, fast.

Bringing in Josh Moriarty, Aaron Shanahan and Daniel Whitechurch on guitar, drums and keys/bass respectively, Miami Horror started touring,

and Australian festival were soon lining up to book them for shows. It’s not surprising. Dip back into the *Bravado* EP and you’ll be surprised the band isn’t already huge in Europe and the States. Reminiscent of Daft Punk, Miami Horror’s electro-dance-pop sound is cultured and energetic far beyond its years, with sleek hooks and riffs repeating incessantly without you ever wanting them to stop.

Step into 2010 and their debut album dropped on EMI, of course with Plant producing, and featuring Kimbra and Alan Polomo for extra vocals. *Illumination* feels big, and feels important. It’s maturity for a debut is remarkable, and yet outside Australia the band remains under the radar.

Set to take things worldwide in 2011 with UK and American tours in the pipeline alongside playing at Austin’s SXSW festival, if you thought electro was over, it’s back once more. And here to stay.

JAMES BLAKE

At only 22, the precociously talented Blake has already made impressive inroads with three EP releases last year alone. Each a collage of differing genres – seamlessly linking jazz into dubstep into gospel – the proverbial sky is the limit for Blake who is scheduled to release his debut album early this February. We, for one, can’t wait.



TALL SHIPS (ABOVE)

Three-piece experimental loop band originally from Cornwall who now call Brighton home, having spent most of last year supporting Minus The Bear and Tubelord, they still managed to release two EPs, the sublime *Chemistry* a standout track. The band are next set to join 65daysofstatic on tour.

MINKS (BELOW)

If the last three years have taught us anything it's that anyone still happy to worship at the alter of retro would rather do it in black. White Lies, Crystal Castles, as well as the continued popularity/critical weight of icons such as Joy Division and The Cure meant that for every MGMT and Vampire Weekend there was a dark twin. This trend happily continues today with Minks; Sean Kilfoyle and Amalie Brunn's happy/sad (but mostly



TIED TO THE MAST

Formed from various stalwarts of the ever-emerging Brighton scene, including Viper-Suzas and Kept By Casino, TTTM released their self-recorded debut EP at the end of November. The band wears their influences proudly, sounding like a combination of *Superfuzz* era Mudhoney spliced with '90s lo-fi. Biting guitar leads, fierce basslines and shattering drus amount to a band already at ease at creating no-nonsense rock.

sad) duo. If Best Coast is the sound of carefree days in the sun, Minks is the oncoming storm, with melodic guitar and synth bogged down with post punk bass and track titles such as *Funeral Song* and *Bruises*.

Hailing from New York, like the equally spaced out Cults, there seems to be something with the city producing black and white loving duos. Minks' blog, IAMWITCHCRAFT, for example, features various photographs of war, pop cultural icons and late night parties practically screaming art-school cool. It's all very Jim Jarmusch in image but the songs are far too bouncy to keep the hardcore Goths happy, instead they've taken the bipolar template of Robert Smith and run with it. Angst is far more loveable with a beat you can dance too, and Minks debut *By The Hedge* is certainly that; strangely loveable. While the blatantly obvious British New Wave influences might put some off, tracks like *Ophelia* will win Minks plenty of fans, with its Strokes-made-circa 1982 sound and other worldly quality. With their debut LP out January, followed by a tour with Dum Dum Girls, 2011 will prove the band's make or break year. Let's just hope it's a case of sad songs and happy times rather than the alternative.

GALLOPS

Described by one review as 'cyborg soul music', Gallops are quietly building a reputation for live, pulsating, experimental music. With a string of influences including Aphex Twin and Fugazi, their standout track *Lasers* is captivating, and the band has recently translated their ferocious live performances into three live sessions on Radio One.

JAPANESE VOYEURS

If Hole's 'big' comeback felt like a bit of a let down to many don't despair there is hope. Japanese Voyeurs are bigger, grittier and nastier – true holders of the torch named grunge – and sure to bring plaid shirts back into fashion. All quiet/loud dynamics, creepy cute girl vocals and explosive drumming, the band proudly scream their allegiance to the rock nation. Key is Romily Alice, provider of the kind of anguished screaming that the genre's been missing since the mid-'90s, and missed it has been. In an age of manufactured music it's refreshing to hear a girl truly let roar, and not in the crooning sense, in an entertainingly primal manner while plugged into a heap of amps. Songs like *Milk Teeth* showcase a band that aren't merely trying to replicate their favourite albums, but rather make something worthy of standing up next to them. Opening with a skin thrashing onslaught of feed-backing guitars, smacking of Nirvana's final, *In Utero*, Alice drags the listener into

Voyeurs' twisted world. When not talking about holes in mental faculties the band rely on their tight riffing to do the talking, portraying a more metal loving side of the group. This more contemporary edge is what's grabbing the attention of teenagers up and down the country with appearances as diverse as The Crown in Middlesbrough, and Sonisphere and Download festivals proving word of mouth hits. Those lazy in descriptive ability will try and connect the group to Tennessee's emo-superstars Paramore but such comparisons are both unfair and likely to result in more than angry words. Japanese Voyeurs are just simply not that accessible and far too in love with the past to be worrying about hair straighteners and the right shade of ginger. Theirs is a sound of real rock music; angst, betray and distress, conveyed through the loud application of guitars and using the methods passed down from those before them. If its something with a bit of bite you be wanting in 2011, this band will most happily oblige.

HOW TO DRESS WELL

Imagine that happy go lucky R'n'B kid you know got trapped and forced to spend all night on a Ghost Train. They would sound like Tom Krell aka How To Dress Well –haunted, distance yet simultaneously damn approachable. R'n'B as a rule is a fun, celebratory and smooth genre were ego's are allowed to run amok in order to fuel their owners into creating danceable anthems for the masses. Krell is, for lack of a better example, Bon Iver with beats, the perfect hybrid to appeal to today's more open-minded indie fan.

Rapidly building a cache of downloadable content via his blog and Myspace over the past year his star is now shining brightly with tour dates and recent single releases selling well and debut *Love Remains* critically admired stateside. The ethereal take on the genre might be somewhat down to the Brooklyn raised artists second

love, *Philosophy*. Studying in Cologne and Berlin while writing material, *How To Dress Well* ends up as the soundtrack to the post-rave ambient room rather than the main event, an effect laden realm to escape for a few minutes and take a much appreciated breather. While only a small amount beside the hype is known it's clear that this falsetto voiced lo-fi peddler loves his '90s tunes.

Raised on his local radio station KS 107.5, R'n'B acted as an escape from his older brothers consuming love of metal and guitar music and now in adulthood it's the unexpected likes of Kanye West he continues to look to. With *Love Remains* recently afforded a UK releases its due time the British Isles got a taste of Krell's impressive 13-track collection. It's been a long hike on the rumour mill but it's time for listeners to not so much get some fashion tips but see what one man and bedroom studio can do.



MIDDLE BROTHER (ABOVE)

If you were at SXSW 2010, there was one show that proved a real hot ticket. With each of their bands performing at the Austin festival, touted 'super-group' MG&V played their first – and until just last December – only show in their history. Formed of John McCauley of Deer Tick, Taylor Goldsmith of Dawes, and Matt Vasquez of Delta Spirit, MG&V's late night set at the Ale House on March 19th, 2010, saw the trio find rave reviews and perhaps turn what was once just a side-project

into something a lot more serious. Now bedding down under the name Middle Brother, their Americana has energy and passion, and with a second show at LA's The Troubadour, the band reached unheralded levels of hype for a name of such little exposure.

Due out March 1st, their self-titled 12-track debut was announced recently, alongside an expansive US tour, given the combined might and talent of Middle Brother's trio, it's hard to see how they could fail.

It all started when McCauley was recording in Nashville at the start of

2010. Inviting Goldsmith to join him, and then Vasquez too, after a couple of days of little sleep, just jamming and getting stuff onto tape, they had 13 songs ready to go and a sense this band could be special, and though Matt and John were new to each other, their styles gelled well.

Each's first bands will probably always be more important but expect Middle Brother to make a new name for McCauley, Goldsmith and Vasquez this year, and for them to be back and SXSW come March, and at a lot of other venues too for that matter.



CULTS (ABOVE)

The word 'cult' brings two things to mind; the mentally unstable zongo worshipping death cults of Midwest America, and the type of bands and films that your cooler elder sibling puts you onto. New York-based boyfriend/girlfriend duo Cults are the latter, though oddly inspired by the former. Moving from San Diego to the Big Apple, film students Madeline Follin (vocals) and Brian Oblivion (guitar/vocals) soon started writing tunes inspired by their shared love of '60s melodic pop and posted them online.

Many Facebook 'likes' from friends soon turned into tangible online buzz, with mp3s rapidly shared around indie blogs and campuses alike, all resulting in an onslaught of record deal offers; a strange occurrence considering the couple have the music equivalent of agoraphobia, shying away from standard publicity proce-

dures and opting to bide their time and consider their options. In fact the band has no official site or MySpace page, as well as a difficult name to throw into a search bar; a humble Bandcamp page containing three tracks and a list of booking links is still the most an interested party can hope for. Yet in this day and age that's also refreshing; no flashy promo's, no shameless self promotion, just three songs combined with a healthy heap of mystery, which seems to be working quite well considering Cults' debut album will be out on Sony imprint In The Name Of next spring. Until then listeners will just have to immerse themselves in the three available tracks' retro-drenched twee-pop, the perfect mix of 21st century reverb-loving indie and sixties melodic chic. It's the sound of a lonely twenty-something driving in the next Sofia Coppola movie, it's the sound of lazy mornings, and it's the sound of summer 2011.



SPECTRALS (ABOVE)

Making music that defies simple categorisation, Spectrals revel in the polar opposites of 'doo-wop' and girl groups of the '60s paired with early psychedelic pop. With a few well-received EPs released in 2010, and catchy single *7th Date* having some success on various radio stations, 2011 is looking very bright for the group.

MALE BONDING

The scuzzy band from Dalston had a brilliant 2010 releasing the superb debut album *Nothing Hurts* and signing to the legendary Sub Pop. If recent rumours are to be believed, then recording sessions with Rivers Cuomo of Weezer could further elevate their status as London's brightest band.

WE BARBARIANS (RIGHT)

Long Beach band We Barbarians have been on the verge of something special for a couple of years now, but it's yet to quite bubble over. That's where 2011 comes in.

Buzz has been steadily building now for a while, but the three-piece have yet to really capitalise on some quite brilliant releases and breathtaking live shows. Putting out debut EP *In The Doldrums* in 2007, with an extended vinyl later following in 2008 and their first full length at the tail end of 2009, trying to keep full time jobs and with album *There's This There's That* getting lost as the music press looked ahead to 2010, they have been a little held back. Refocused and refreshed, from summer 2010 the band has come on leaps and bounds, and at last started to pick up all the plaudits they so obviously deserve.

Writing a spate of new material, more driven, aggressive and powerful than their usual melodic, atmospheric indie rock, We Barbarians look the latter half of the year by storm. Touring with Passion Pit on their huge nationwide tour, Ra Ra Riot also across the States and Local Natives for their huge Governors Island show in New York, never mind Cold War Kids on the west coast, they even had the latter's Matt Aveiro direct a video for single *There's This There's That*.



Now sharing Foundations Artist Management's roster with the aforementioned Passion Pit, plus Dr. Dog, White Rabbits and Tokyo Police Club, with whom they shared an invite-only gig at NYC's pop-up Wired Store, they've been picking up some serious press in outlets far beyond the west coast staples that have been shouting their praises for so long.

Never ones to rest on their laurels, 2011 is set to be the biggest year in We Barbarians' history. Trading in the security of their desk jobs for the chance to really go for it, expect a lot of upcoming dates to be confirmed in the very near future, though more importantly, they've a new EP due out

in a couple of months. Releasing teaser track *Headspace* for free download from their website late-2010, they've been showcasing the new music for a couple of months now and the similarly fresh *The Wait Is Over* has also gone down a treat.

Though they're remarkably rapid in the studio (they recorded their debut EP in just a couple of days), it might be a little presumptuous to assume We Barbarians will have a new LP out in 2011, but with a UK tour in the pipeline they'll still be branching out into new territories, and are undoubtedly one of the most exciting names to watch out of the States, never mind just the Long Beach scene.

NIKI AND THE DOVE

Sweden has a habit of producing great female-fronted acts; The Knife and The Cardigans have always proved a pleasure, and now it's time for Niki And The Dove to join the same ear-pleasing ranks. Still, as a country they do have issues with the whole naming process; there is no Niki or Dove in the before mentioned band, just great electro-pop tunes with a darker edge. 'The Dove' actually consists of Malin Dahlstrom (vocals), Gustaf Karlof (keyboards), and Magnus Boqvist (drums), resi-

dents of Stockholm and makers of some truly exciting music. *Under The Bridges* is just one these tracks, over seven minutes of uplifting escapism sharing DNA with both Bjork and Kate Bush's finest eighties moments.

Still, the song stands proudly on its own merits, for one the European heritage adds a distinct and impossible-to-emulate sound; the uplifting beats and near industrial samples somehow creating a perfect disco atmosphere for which Malin's dramatic lyrics and vocal delivery to play. A haunting sense of longing and mystery

fills the music, only matched by the band's bizarre music videos – often recycled footage of gymnasts and dance classes are used to add an extra sense of separation of band from audience. This proves a clever strategy; making the listener eager to know more just feeds the anticipation for new material, and with a little luck some UK live dates come the turn of 2011. Until, you'll have to head to Moshi Moshi's Singles Club to grab *Under The Bridges* and *DJ, Ease My Mind* for a double A-Sided 12" vinyl that's more than worth the money.



HOLY GHOST! (ABOVE)

They've been on our radar since they smashed onto the scene in 2006 with disco classic *Hold On*, but this is their year Holy Ghost! will get the acclaim they deserve.

You might have doubted their credentials as a live act as they have always existed primarily as producers, DJs and remixers, but on the back of the release of debut EP *Static On The Wire* in 2010, they started playing with a live band for the first time. Personally blown away by their performance at a recent Bugged Out! event in London, the energy and quality of their set was remarkable, meaning they now hold a full deck of cards. On top of stellar remixes (see MGMT, Friendly Fires, Phoenix, LCD Soundsystem) their own tracks are equally suited to the club, and now, gigging stages.

Holy Ghost! is childhood friends Nicholas Millhiser and Alexander Frankel and they first started a hip-hop group way back in 1998 when they were leaving school in New York. It was an ill-fated venture but their love

of sampling and analogue electronic sound persisted and evolved into the nu-disco sound of Holy Ghost!.

Clearly influenced by the musical heritage of their home city, their sound combines the smooth disco vibe of late-'70s funk with the quantised beats and sampling of early hip-hop producers. The duo are self-professed analogue-geeks so everything sounds smooth and warm, with each tone meticulously created the old fashioned way. Similar at times to contemporaries Aeroplane and Friendly Fires, Holy Ghost! though stray more often toward artists from the golden age of disco like Giorgio Moroder.

It comes as no surprise that they're signed to the super-cool New York DFA label alongside LCD Soundsystem and Hot Chip. This isn't a faddish label, but one that tracks down the very best electronic musicians regardless of current trends, and although they are not strictly a new act, if they keep putting on stellar performances and hit the festivals come the summer, they're a new name that should go far in 2011.



THE SAVAGE NOMADS (LEFT)

“A band is like a relationship with a girl; when it falls apart you may never recover.” It hasn’t all been a swift path to success, as frontman Cole Salewicz reminisces on his heart breaks in the music industry. The experience led him and current band mate Billy Boone, whom he describes as ‘the best drummer in London’, on a “hunt through south London.”

On this journey they met a profusion of musicians; Cole having played with Clash founder Mick Jones’ daughter in the band Sailor No Youth, Cole and Billy started jamming with bass player Josh Miles in Crystal Palace; writing songs and discerning a garage-rock sound with a punk energy twist. Josh joined the group and The Savage Nomad’s were formed. After performing at a show in Brixton, the band were soon after offered a seven-week residency at the Inn On The Green in Ladbroke Grove, and known as the Carbon Casino shows, The Savage Nomads found themselves supporting Mick Jones’ new band, Carbon/Silicon. While the band also later secured a long term residency at 12 Bar Club in Denmark Street, weekly performing their oldest and most loyal song, *Read Up*; one of the five tracks listed on their *What The Angel Said* EP.

The addition of guitarist Joe Gillick completed the band, Cole branding him ‘a genius guitar player and master arranger – a sound detective’, and they soon received offers from numerous established record labels, though manager Martin Tibbetts always stopped them from signing the wrong deal, they eventually signed the right deal with Alaska Sounds – an independent label who understood the band and were happy with the full package. The label is associated with a host of eclectic acts; those on Ninja Tune as well as the cream of UK hip-hop; Roots Manuva and Gammer to name a few.

Having supported for Kill It Kid, Sweethead (featuring Troy Van Leeuwen from Queens Of The Stone Age), Huey Morgan of Fun Loving Criminals and more bizarrely, Kelly Rowland – which Cole finds “hilarious” – the band are certainly not shy onstage. With their infectious energy and Cole’s vocals akin to the late Joe Strummer, they’ve become an unstoppable force during live sets. This vitality is translated into their versatile EP; from the chaotic guitar clamours of *What the Angel Said*, to the elegant tremble of drums in *An Empty Seat*. The lyrics flow poetically and embrace life and London; You fear the air you breathe/ You fear more what you read. Expect the bands’ debut album to drop in March.

MIDLAND

Midland and his contemporaries – Ramadanman, Mosca et al – filled the gap that an increasingly banal, commercial and uninspired dubstep genre vacated in 2010. It has been dubbed (no pun intended) future garage, which is as much a genre as nu-rave was, however, it is true to say that Midland blends elements of garage with deep house,

plus the industry and darkness of what dubstep once was.

Other artists have been pushing the boundaries of the post-dubstep sound, but Midland is certainly the pick for 2011 given his sublime production and effortless and inventive mixing of genres. And then there’s his remix of Caribou’s *Sun*; it is one of the best tracks of last year – deceptively simple yet dark and driving.

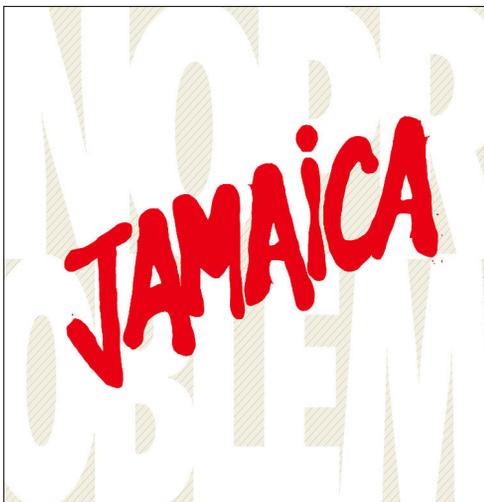




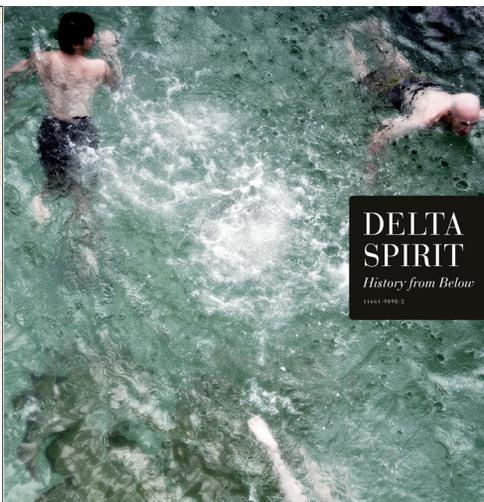
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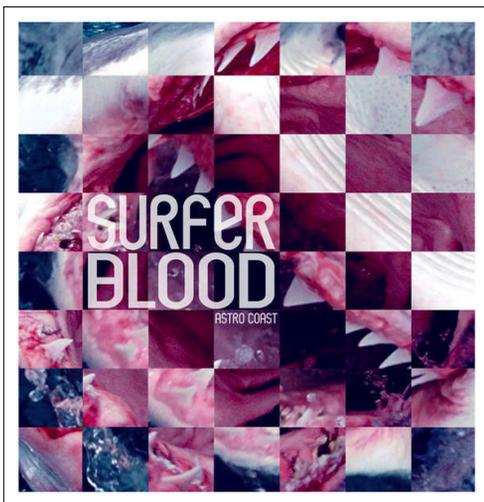
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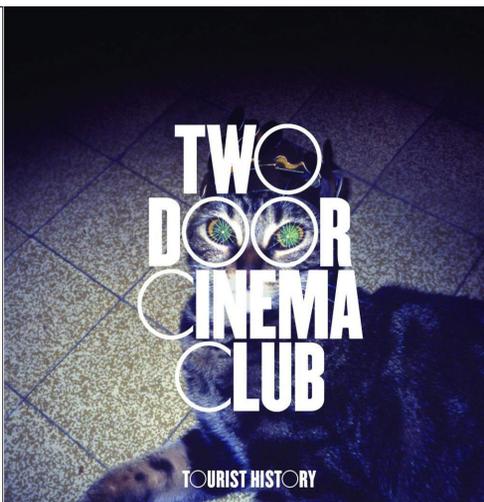
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No 4 **DANGER DAYS...**
BY **MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE**



No 5 **ASTRO COAST** BY
SURFER BLOOD



No 6 **TOURIST HISTORY**
BY **TWO DOOR CINEMA CLUB**



No 7 **LUCKY SHINER**
BY **GOLD PANDA**



No 8 **TEEN DREAM**
BY **BEACH HOUSE**



No 9 **SUBIZA** BY
DELOREAN



No 10 **TOTAL LIFE FOREVER**
BY **FOALS**



WHITE LIES RITUAL

RELEASED JANUARY 17, 2011

After debut album *To Lose My Life* quickly transported White Lies from little known doom-rockers into a massive indie breakthrough, the level of the London trio's success surely surprised even them. Tingeing a gothic edge over the new music scene ever since, their style certainly has lasting appeal, but whether their time in the limelight would be fleeting and they'd quickly come undone with the typical 'difficult second album' was always going to be a major hurdle they had to face.

Grander, more complex and backing each track up with a depth their debut teased that they're capable of, the dark synths are pleasingly back but they've got more of a lo-fi electro edge now too; particularly effective on the distortion-heavy *Holy Ghost* and single *Bigger Than Us*. *Ritual* isn't perfect – it feels like it could be prone to becoming quickly overplayed – but White Lies sophomore effort is still a mesmerising and thoroughly assured retro-glam daze.

★★★★★



COLD WAR KIDS MINE IS YOURS

RELEASED JANUARY 24, 2011

After breaking through with debut *Robbers & Cowards* in 2006, follow-up *Loyalty To Loyalty* might have been much more commercially successful but in the eyes of critics, it was widely accepted that the Long Beachers dropped the ball. Refocusing and coming back with last year's wonderful EP *Behave Yourself*, there's no doubt Cold War Kids got their edge back, and going into recording *Mine Is Yours*, found new focus and drive to make third album of great craft and maturity.

Produced by Jacquire King, you can soon feel his influence and throughout the LP there are wisps of Kings Of Leon; long-term collaborators of King's. *Mine Is Yours* is a little less quirky than what we're used to from the Cali band yet still very creative and has an effortless and more confident flow to it. From single *Louder Than Ever* to movie trailer dream *Finally Begin* and *Skip The Charades*, the band's trademark rhythm is ever present and will please fans no end.

★★★★★



CHAPEL CLUB PALACE

RELEASED JANUARY 31, 2011

Turning their scenester "I'm in a band" cliché into something a whole lot more serious, don't be put off by Chapel Club's Dalston base; this London five-piece have a lot more going for them than your average up-and-comers. Debut *Palace*, the titled harking back to a previous iteration of the band, is a lot more than layered hooks and synths, and on the back of some stellar live shows throughout 2010, it's pretty obvious that this band are about anything but being pretentious.

No doubt Manic Street Preachers' Nicky Wire would still pigeonhole Chapel Club as 'landfill indie' but *Palace* sounds fresh, and though it lacks a little variation at times, it's a really promising debut. O. Children-esque *The Shore* and single *Surfacing* demand particular attention, while a driving melody and real tone to the vocals on *Five Trees* is similarly ear-catching. They're not the finished article yet, but Chapel Club are well on the way to something big.

★★★★★



THE JOY FORMIDABLE THE BIG ROAR

RELEASED JANUARY 24, 2011

Lauded by NME for some time now, the rest of the music press, never mind the listening public, has taken some time to warm to The Joy Formidable, but at last, the Welsh indie rock three-piece seem to be making a much wider impact.

The Big Roar, as you might have expected from the title, is loud, and comes at you from the get-go. Just the way it should do. Unlike the bare nature of fellow indie-rock frontrunners Blood Red Shoes or No Age, The Joy Formidable's sound is much fuller, and surges in waves. Playing the lighter notes of Ritzy Bryan's vocals off against the backing darker, grungier guitar and drums, *The Big Roar* has been some time in the making for the talented trio, and you can feel it in every beat. Though their debut loses its way a couple of times before a thrilling climax, The Joy Formidable can be pleased to have really made their mark with a captivating and entertaining debut.

★★★★★



FILM



2011 PREVIEW



EDGAR WRIGHT
INTERVIEW



OUR TOP 10 FILMS
OF 2010



AWARDS SEASON
PREVIEW



REVIEWS



DVD & BLU-RAY
REVIEWS

A young boy with dark, wavy hair is shown from the chest up, wearing a dark blue duffle coat over a white shirt and a dark tie. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera. The background is a dilapidated wooden structure, possibly a tower or a large staircase, with many missing planks and a rusted metal frame. The lighting is warm and golden, suggesting late afternoon or early morning. The overall mood is somber and cinematic.

2011 *in* FILM

WORDS BY ANDREW SIMPSON



We are living in interesting times. With house prices set to plummet again, cuts on the horizon and trouble on the streets, 2011 looks like another year of uncertainty. But one thing you can count on is that cinema will always be there, and while it goes without saying that you're not going to be able to escape the franchises, it's also true that many of those overly familiar wizards, robots and secret agents will be coming at us for the last time this year. Throw in some young directors, the return of the masters and an exciting crop of British talent, and it might not be such a bad year after all.





PICTURED (CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT):
THE WARD, THE THING, SCREAM 4, I SPIT ON YOUR GRAVE



Those looking for an escape from the prestige films of awards season in the early months of 2011, first of all, can rejoice at the return of John Carpenter. The director of genre classics like *Halloween* and *Escape From New York* is back in January with his first feature since 2001's *Ghosts Of Mars*, and *The Ward*, a *Shutter Island*-esque horror set in a 1960s mental hospital, should serve as an old school antidote to the excesses of torture porn. Those tastes are served by the remake of legendary video-nastie *I Spit On Your Grave*, which, like the original, has caused controversy with its explicit portrayal of an assaulted woman's revenge on her rapists. But the release of a prequel to his 1982 classic *The Thing* will ultimately mean that horror in 2011 belongs to Carpenter. Starring *Scott Pilgrim*'s witty Mary-Elizabeth Winstead and boasting an excellent screenwriter in *Battlestar Galactica*'s Ronald D. Moore, it will be hard pushed to match the original's creepy atmosphere and schlocky invention without Carpenter at the helm, but here's hoping. There is far less optimism for *Scream 4*, which arrives in April, more likely to be a desperate attempt to resurrect the careers of Neve Campbell and Courtney Cox than be a welcome return.





PICTURED (CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT):
THE GREEN HORNET, SUCKER PUNCH, THOR





If Hollywood needs fresh material, that material has invariably meant comic books, and 2011 promises to be no different. *The Green Hornet*, already worryingly pushed back from its original release to be retrofitted for 3-D, has an intriguing creative combination in the writing/acting talents of Seth Rogen and French director Michel Gondry. Rogen never comes across as completely likeable, but while that has been a hindrance in romantic roles, this film could genuinely work in an era of flawed superheroes. Gondry, meanwhile, is one of the most inventive directors out there, and the willingness to indulge flights of fancy that made *Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind*, *The Science Of Sleep* and *Be Kind, Rewind* both inconsistent and thrilling could add a new dimension to the genre. It's hard to tell whether it'll end up being mesmeric or a disaster, but we'll find out in January (and on page 56).

A great premise, meanwhile, underpins *Sucker Punch*; a 1950s-set tale of a young girl who enters a fantastical imaginary world to escape her incarceration in a mental hospital. Featuring serpents, samurais, a host of villains and an insane arsenal of weaponry, it has been described as *Alice In Wonderland* with machine guns by its writer-director Zack Snyder. From *300* to *Watchmen*, Snyder has shown eye-popping visual style, but inconsistent dramatic quality. As one of the year's few original creations, this will show what he's really made of when it is released in March. Following on its heels in April is *Thor*, and the fact that it has Kenneth Branagh at the helm says a lot about how seriously people now take comic book properties. Branagh, with his previous form for Shakespearean and Greek tragedy, is well suited to a story of a god cast out of heaven, and it's also caused a furore amongst white supremacists by casting black English actor Idris Elba as a Norse God. That's reason enough to lend it your support, but the key is whether Branagh can lend it his dramatic heft.





In drama, no year would be complete without the return of the ‘Woody Allen is back on form’ debate. Allen lost his way more than a decade ago now, but always gets critical backing, no matter how many *Match Points* or *Cassandra’s Dreams* he unleashes on the world. His two most recent films, *Whatever Works* and *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*, used *Curb Your Enthusiasm*’s Larry David and sexuality’s Penelope Cruz respectively to distract audiences from their innate terribleness, so expect people to rave about the fabulous Naomi Watts when *You Will Meet a Tall Dark Stranger* gets released in March, but don’t be fooled by what is undoubtedly another depressing sign of a major artist’s decline. His refusal to retire will start to taint his established classics at some stage.

Fans of *Annie Hall* shouldn’t be too despondent through, as *IT Crowd* star Richard Ayoade also arrives in March with his Allen-inflected directorial debut, *Submarine*. A comedic tale of a fifteen year old boy struggling to lose his virginity, reunite his parents and accept that he might not be a literary genius, it has already won huge plaudits on the festival circuit. In the same month, *Archipelago* shows Joanna Hogg to be a masterful examiner of those very British traits, class and social awkwardness. Set amongst an imploding upper middle class family on holiday in the Scilly Isles, it has a feel for human interaction that’s reminiscent of Eric Rohmer, and Hogg may well prove to be a kind of Mike Leigh for the bourgeoisie. Margaret Thatcher biopic *The Iron Lady*, which in a period of cuts and civil unrest couldn’t be arriving at a better time, is ironically the last film funded by the UK Film Council, and has bravely cast Meryl Streep in the lead role. Meanwhile, Lyn Ramsey (*Ratcatcher*) returns with an adaptation of bestseller *We Need To Talk About Kevin*, and Andrea Arnold (*Fish Tank*) tackles literary classic *Wuthering Heights*. And they say British film is in decline.





PICTURED (CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT):
SUBMARINE, YOU WILL MEET A TALL DARK
STRANGER, WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT KEVIN,
ARCHIPELAGO





America is also looking to provide some high drama this year, and seems to be doing so entirely via Matt Damon. As well as starring in the Coens' *True Grit* and Clint Eastwood's *Hereafter*, he appears alongside Kate Winslet in Steven Soderbergh's *Contagion*, a take on the virus outbreak movie due in October. In March Damon also leads *The Adjustment Bureau*, a thriller about a Congressman who glimpses mysterious forces controlling his future after he falls for Emily Blunt's ballet dancer. Directed by *Bourne* scribe George Nolfi and based on a Philip K. Dick story, it could be this year's *Inception*, although *Source Code*, which forces Jake Gyllenhaal to relive a train bombing over and over again, could also take that prize, and with Duncan Jones (*Moon*) behind the camera, it just might. The ultra secretive JJ Abrams (*Lost*, *Cloverfield*) also returns with *Super 8*, details of which are so closely guarded that the only known plot-point is Area 51. Less high concept, but equally thrilling, is Kelly Reichardt's *Meek's Cutoff*, which is released in April and tells the story of a group of nineteenth century pioneers who begin to fight amongst themselves when they become lost on the American frontier. Starring Michelle Williams, fast becoming America's finest actress, it is a cunning subversion of the Western genre, and a breathtakingly subtle exercise in tension.

None of this means that we won't be inundated with sequels, of course. *Pirates Of The Caribbean: On Stranger Tides* is the fourth in a series that's lately descended into a particular type of fun-free plot overload. Now hopping on the obligatory 3-D bandwagon, it has dropped Keira Knightley and Orlando Bloom to hand main draw Captain Sparrow (Johnny Depp) an adventure of his own, this time opposite Penelope Cruz. Two further films are being staked on audience goodwill, and while it's hard to justify bringing back a character whose shtick has begun to wear thin, all depends on whether they have rediscovered the original's sense of fun, and if Rob Marshall has learned how to direct a film since *Nine*. Audiences looking for more of a sure thing in May might be better off going to see *The Hangover: Part II*.





PICTURED (CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP RIGHT):
SOURCE CODE, MEEK'S CUTOFF, PIRATES OF
THE CARIBBEAN: ON STRANGER TIDES, THE
ADJUSTMENT BUREAU, THE HANGOVER: PART II





Franchises both good and bad will continue to roll into cinemas all year round, with the good represented by *Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part II*. Managing to entice even those who never got round to reading the novels, it's rare to see a franchise handled this consistently well. No amount of recommendation is likely to persuade those that aren't hooked already, mind you. On entirely the opposite end of the scale the *Transformers* films have divided fans and critics like no other, making huge amounts of money in the face of awful reviews. Even star Shia LaBeouf felt obliged to publicly apologise for the last installment, *Revenge Of The Fallen*, promising fans a better time as *Dark Of The Moon* concludes the trilogy in July. Whether it can overcome the charisma vacuum that is LaBeouf and the visual equivalent of a seizure that is Michael Bay's visual style remains to be seen.

Relying on a whole new set of faces, meanwhile, will be *X-Men: First Class*, starring James McAvoy and *Inglourious Basterd* Michael Fassbender as younger versions of Patrick Stewart and Ian McKellen's original characters. Boasting strong support in Kevin Bacon, and with *Kick-Ass* director Matthew Vaughn onboard, it certainly has the personnel, but may be a dead horse without the original's more recognisable heroes. Meanwhile the money made on merchandise alone by Pixar's only critical dud to date made a sequel inevitable, and while *Cars 2* should at least be better than *Kung-Fu Panda 2*, that scarcely matters when the infinitely more appealing James Franco and Natalie Portman medieval stoner comedy *Your Highness* also hits cinemas in June.





PICTURED (CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT):
CARS 2, YOUR HIGHNESS, TRANSFORMERS:
THE DARK OF THE MOON



The comic book trend continues in July with *Captain America*, but with the unconvincing Chris Evans (*Fantastic Four*) in the lead, it hardly inspires anticipation. Far more promising is *The Green Lantern*, and while it's success ultimately rests on *Casino Royale* director Martin Campbell's ability to create a convincing *X-Men*-esque blend of real world scenarios and superhuman characters, the choice of Ryan Reynolds to play the first human member of an intergalactic crime fighting force seems like the right one. His turns in both *Buried* and *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* showed that he possesses the same mixture of intensity and charm that helped make Robert Downey Jnr.'s casting as Iron Man a success. Jon Favreau, that film's director, will deliver his own comic adaptation in August with *Cowboys & Aliens*, and while there is almost no way it can live up to the expectations created by its premise (aliens invade the Wild West) and cast (Daniel Craig, Harrison Ford), that doesn't mean it won't be one of the blockbuster highlights of the year.

New sequels to *Paranormal Activity*, *Johnny English* and *Final Destination* also touch down before *Twilight: Breaking Dawn* hits our screens in November. Aping *Harry Potter* by being split into two parts, by this stage though, it's unlikely to win or lose any followers. *Mission: Impossible* also returns late in the year with *Ghost Protocol*. While *M:I III* was not considered a resounding success, it was extremely underrated, and J.J. Abrams, that film's director, has written the new installment. Director Brad Bird may have only have worked on animated films, but when those films are *The Incredibles* and *Ratatouille* you deserve a break, and with the magnetic Jeremy Renner backing up Tom Cruise, this one might actually exceed expectations.







All this is bound to pale before two of the year's most hyped films, Steven Spielberg's motion captured version of *Tintin* and Martin Scorsese's live action adaptation of children's favourite *Hugo Cabaret*, both of which arrive in time for Christmas. The fact that both directors have decided to make their films in 3-D is undoubtedly going to lend new prestige to a technology that many have dismissed as a fad, but if these two masters can't convince us of 3-D technology's worth, it will definitely be time to put it back in the box marked 'novelty'. For all of us, then, 2011 is make or break.





interview with

Edgar Wright

*director of **Scott Pilgrim Vs. The World***

*(oh, and **Shaun Of The Dead** and **Hot Fuzz**)*

words by James Wright

It's difficult to imagine director Edgar Wright doing anything else other than creating witty, pop culture-infused cinematic masterpieces. Wright's relatively young, but hugely successful career to date, can all be traced to one regular occurrence as a child. "Me and my brother

would always get dumped off at these cinema double bills in Dorset because our parents did craft fairs," Wright explains. "The problem, however, was that my dad always mistimed when he would pick us up and it would always be midway through the second film, which was usually the one me and

my brother actually wanted to see. In fact I remember this one particular traumatic incident, involving a double bill of *Cat From Outer Space* and *The Incredible Hulk*. I think in the end I had to be dragged out midway through *The Hulk* yelling 'I want to see the Hulk change!'" admits a chuckling Wright.

Despite the traumatic event, Wright battled on and at the tender age of 14 shot his first motion picture, a Super 8 short entitled, *Rolf Harris Saves The World*. That early taste led the way for Wright to successfully, write, produce, direct, edit and release his first theatrical release, *A Fistful of Fingers*, at only 20.

Although Wright was initially unconvinced by the quality of his 78 minute no-budget British western, it did pave the way for his foray into television directing, after Matt Lucas and David Walliams viewed it at the Prince Charles cinema in London. "They loved it and off the back of that they asked me to direct this cable show they were making for the Paramount Comedy Channel, which was really fortunate because I thought I'd screwed up and wasn't sure what would happen next. I mean it was great being able to work on all those TV programs like *Mash And Peas*, *Asylum* and Alexei Sayle's *Merry-Go-Round*, but it was also kinda strange. I was only 22 and so people always thought I was like a runner or somebody's son and I remember Alexei Sayle saying to me once, "Edgar, we need to get you some adult clothes."

One cult TV Series, two highly praised films and many other side projects later, Wright arrived at Hollywood's door with aplomb, releasing his first US Production in the shape of *Scott Pilgrim Vs. The World*; an adaptation of the much celebrated *Scott Pilgrim* comic book series created by Bryan Lee O'Malley. The 8-bit kung-fu action spectacular has proved one of the major hits of 2010, but even then Wright remains modest in his overview. "I'm not one of those people who thinks that everything I do is perfect, far from it. There's always something in the film where I go 'ahh if only I'd done that' and *Scott Pilgrim* was no different, in fact, it was probably the most pressure I'd experienced. Not because it was a studio film, but because there was a lot to live up to in terms of other films of the same genre and also I really wanted to do justice by Bryan's books. So having people who are top of their league worldwide, like

Bill Pope who was D.O.P. for *The Matrix* trilogy and *Spider-Man*, Brad Allen who worked on *Avatar* and *Kick-Ass* as stunt coordinator and Nigel Godrich who scored the film, really made all the difference. At the same time, all those guys I've worked with before we're just as important. Like Marcus Rolands, the production designer who I've worked with since *Spaced*, he's amazing; I think his sets in the movie are incredible. But he's also the most modest, softly spoken guy. You barely see him on the making-of DVD, but that's not because he's been cut out it's just because he's impossible to get on camera. Also having Bryan involved as a collaborator all the way through was crucial and I know that I wouldn't have done this film if Bryan wasn't involved."

The resulting film was arguably one of the most original comic book adaptations of recent years, but it's also worth considering the strength of the film as a complete package, with an equally impressive soundtrack and game to its name. "Well I worked very hard on the soundtrack and a lot of the tracks are sort of either myself or Bryan Lee O'Malley's picks from his original playlists, and then obviously Nigel did the score which was fantastic. As for the game, I can't take credit for that because that's the work of the geniuses at Ubisoft and Paul Robertson. I don't think I even got to play the Ubisoft game properly until after the film was all done, and I was kind of blown away by how good it was. That's the thing though, I think there's a lot of bad film videogames, or ones that are sort of a bit lacklustre, so I think because obviously Bryan is such a big gamer, and because obviously *Scott Pilgrim* is adept to video games, it was important to all of us, but especially to Bryan, that the game was good. So early on the idea was "let's not do video-game versions of the actors, let's make them look like the comics" and it just seemed a perfect fit really."

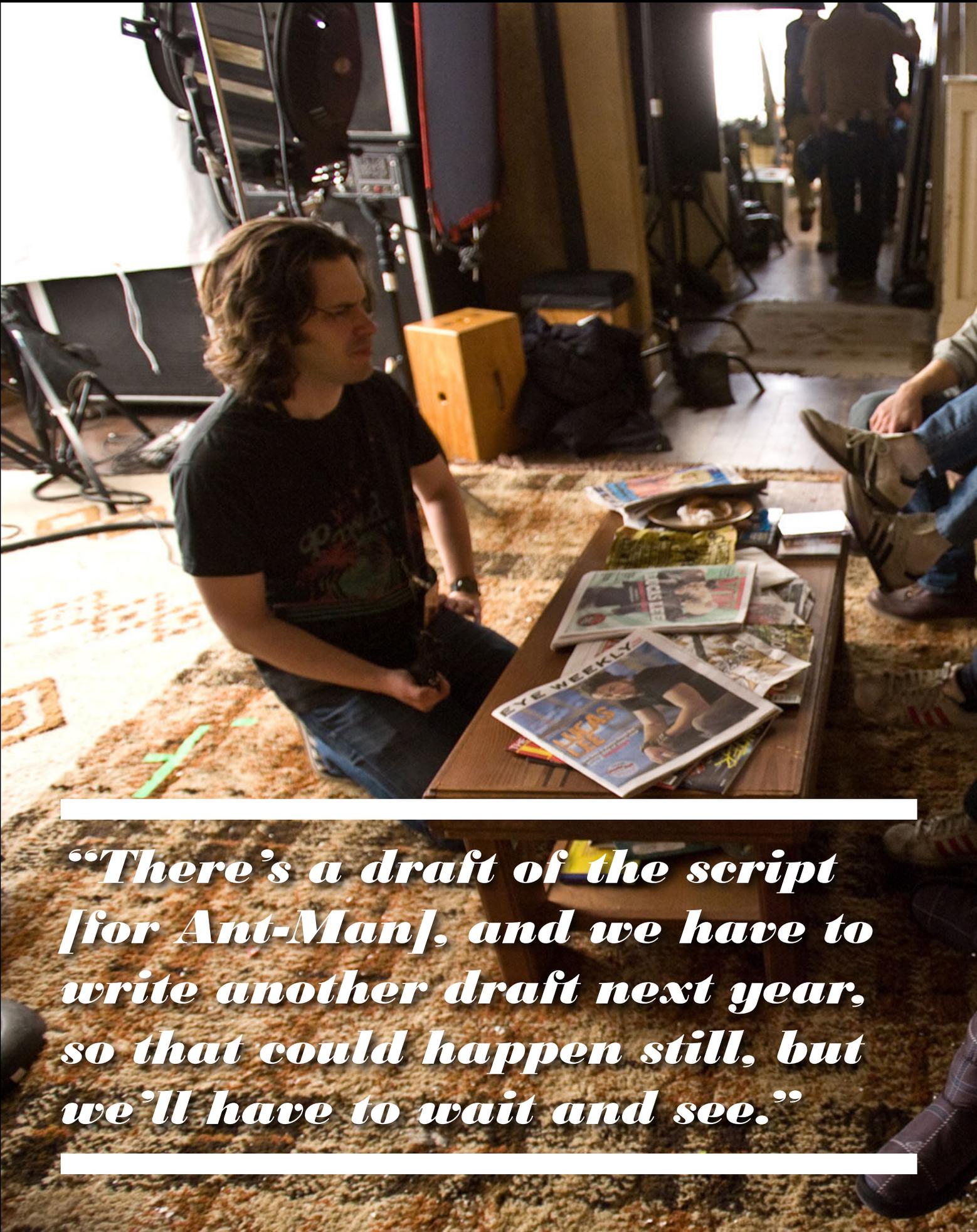
With the success of *Scott Pilgrim* now behind him, it's difficult to assess where Wright would direct his efforts next. Up until now, it's been widely

tipped that Wright would focus his attention on everything from an adaptation of Jon Ronson's sensational book *Them: Adventures With Extremists*, to a big screen imagining of Marvel Comics *Ant-Man*. "Yeah I don't think that *Them* is going to happen anymore," confesses Wright. "I mean I wasn't necessarily going to direct it anyway, it was just something that me and Mike White (*School Of Rock*) were working on a script for. Mike did write this really funny draft but I don't know what's happening with it right now; it seems to be on the back-burner. As for *Ant-Man*, there's a draft of the script ready, and we have to write another draft next year, so that could happen still, but we'll have to wait and see."

Ant-Man certainly appears the likeliest of all the projects swirling around the rumour mill that Wright will take on, and it would seem that the only obstacle preventing a big screen adaptation would stem from the superheroes lack of notoriety outside the comic book world. But having demonstrated his clout to Hollywood with the success of *Scott Pilgrim*, it's understandable that Wright would now have the influence to persuade any and all to back his slightly leftfield superhero story.

"I think that if there's something that you want to do that's a little bit out of the ordinary, there has to also be a way to sell it in a more mainstream fashion. Look at *Inception*, it's a great example of somebody having the biggest hit of all time and then making something really brainy and ballsy with their next film. I don't think Christopher Nolan would have been able to get that film off the ground without *The Dark Knight* making billions of dollars, so I think you have to use your leverage when you have it really I guess."

So who knows, maybe we'll get to see *Ant-Man* or even a big budget reboot of *Rolf Harris Saves The World* after all. "I don't know about Rolf Harris," laughs Wright, "if I did it, I wouldn't need more than £50 to spend on that one, which is what the original cost. But yeah, who knows..."



“There’s a draft of the script [for Ant-Man], and we have to write another draft next year, so that could happen still, but we’ll have to wait and see.”

Scott Pilgrim Vs. The World is out on Blu-Ray and DVD now





THE TOWN



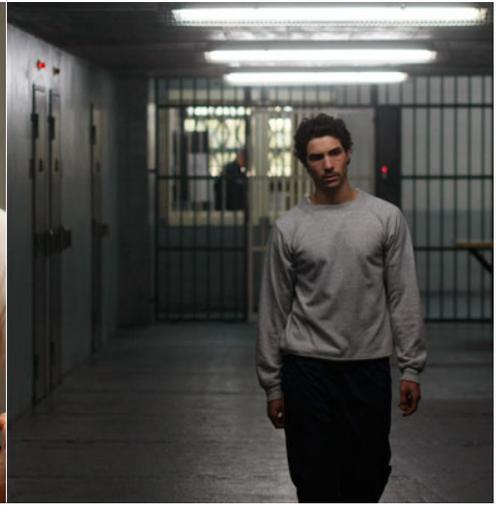
No 2

TOY STORY 3



No 3

THE KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT



No 4

A PROPHET



No 5

THE SOCIAL NETWORK



No 6

I LOVE YOU PHILLIP MORRIS



No 7

YOUTH IN REVOLT



No 8

LET ME IN



No 9

KICK-ASS



No 10

INCEPTION

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

THE AWARDS SEASON IS UPON US AGAIN. IN THE RUN UP TO THE OSCARS (VIA THE DIVERSION OF THEIR TRADITIONAL PRECURSORS AND SOMETIME PREDICTORS THE GOLDEN GLOBES) IT IS ESTABLISHED PRACTICE NOW FOR PUBLICATIONS TO STICK THEIR NECKS OUT AND TRY TO PREDICT WHICH AWARDS WILL GO WHERE. NATURALLY WE ARE NO DIFFERENT.

WORDS BY MARTIN ROBERTS

2010 has been a diverse year and overall a pretty good one. It rode in on the wave of *Avatar's* success and, while there hasn't been anything close to matching the furore that surrounded James Cameron's film (though we hardly expected there to be), box office returns have been strong overall and the scope of films released has been broad. It's also been a strong year for British film (as our look at the awards will reveal) and one that has thrown a fair few surprises our way.

Our look at the awards season will primarily concern the Oscars, though of course the Golden Globes (whatever you may or may not think of them) are still useful in predicting vaguely what will happen at the Oscars, or at least who is likely to be shortlisted. Let's not forget the British Academy Film Awards either, which will be an-

nounced sandwiched between their American counterparts. Last year, the British awards actually provided a closer anticipation of the Oscars than the Golden Globes, by opting to shower plaudits on Kathryn Bigelow's *The Hurt Locker* rather than *Avatar*, which scooped the Best Drama and Director awards at the Globes. Let us also remember that the Globes chose the *The Hangover* as Best Comedy Or Musical last year, a category in which (*500 Days Of Summer* – the clear standout – was also present, and thus shot their own competence in the foot.

ACTING

Colin Firth, we hear the judges whispering, and we're not about to disagree with them. Last year, the battle for best actor awards was fought primar-

ily between Firth and Jeff Bridges (for *A Single Man* and *Crazy Heart* respectively) and ended up going the way most people expected: the US ceremonies decorated Bridges (whose body of work, it was generally felt, deserved reward) while BAFTA gave the gong to Firth. Neither was undeserving of his awards, which meant good feelings all around. The fact that this year, the same two men are in the running again, is a turn up for the books.

Granted, Bridges' performance in *True Grit* is unlikely to win any of the big three, but it's a testament to both men's work at present that they should be once again mentioned in the same breath. Now, the standout favourite is Firth (for *The King's Speech*), and it seems almost nailed-on that both Oscar and the Globes will go for the man they snubbed last year. Will BAFTA go



for Firth twice in a row? We wouldn't bet against it.

The outsiders include Leonardo DiCaprio for *Inception*, the first mention in our rundown of a film that, while loved by most people, may struggle to pick up the big ones. There's also James Franco in *127 Hours* and Mark Wahlberg in *The Fighter*, while Jesse Eisenberg's charged performance as Mark Zuckerberg in *The Social Network* is likely to get a nod too, though whether he can compete with Firth, we'll have to wait and see. A distant outsider could be Ben Affleck for *The Town*, a film which seems unlikely to win much but may yet earn itself a couple of nominations. Ryan Gosling (for *Blue Valentine*) was nominated at the Globes and stands a good chance of making it into the top five too.

The female category is much more

**PREDICTED SHORTLISTS
(WINNERS IN BOLD)**

A C T O R

- JEFF BRIDGES (*TRUE GRIT*)
- JESSE EISENBERG (*THE SOCIAL NETWORK*)
- COLIN FIRTH (*THE KING'S SPEECH*)**
- JAMES FRANCO (*127 HOURS*)
- MARK WAHLBERG (*THE FIGHTER*)

A C T R E S S

- ANNETTE BENING (*THE KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT*)
- NICOLE KIDMAN (*RABBIT HOLE*)
- JENNIFER LAWRENCE (*WINTER'S BONE*)
- NATALIE PORTMAN (*BLACK SWAN*)**
- MICHELLE WILLIAMS (*BLUE VALENTINE*)

difficult to lock down, and at present there isn't a favourite that's been as hotly tipped as Firth. That isn't because the shortlist is weak; on the contrary, it's because it's so strong. At various times Natalie Portman has been lauded as the favourite for her turn as a paranoid ballet-dancer in *Black Swan*, but earlier in the year Jennifer Lawrence drew huge acclaim for her embattled turn in *Winter's Bone* and Michelle Williams has recently caused a stir in *Blue Valentine*. Then there's Leslie Manville in *Another Year*, Anne Hathaway in *Love And Other Drugs* (unlikely), and Annette Bening and Julianne Moore in *The Kids Are All Right*, though Moore seems more likely in the supporting category. Halle Berry's name has also been bandied around for her performance as a schizophrenic in *Frankie And Alice*, as



has Nicole Kidman's for *Rabbit Hole*.

As far as supporting actors are concerned, again it's difficult to choose. In both the male and female categories, there are multiple strong candidates. For actor, Geoffrey Rush is likely to be nominated for *The King's Speech*, Andrew Garfield is almost certain to crop up for his strong turn in *The Social Network*, and Christian Bale looks a strong choice too for *The Fighter*. Those three are almost certain to be nominated, with the group possibly finished up by Michael Douglas for *Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps* and either Sam Rockwell for *Conviction* or, if we are going by the Globes' predictions (which, in this case, we aren't), Jeremy Renner for *The Town*.

The supporting actress category will probably include nods for Annette Bening and Julianne Moore (Bening

**PREDICTED SHORTLISTS
(WINNERS IN BOLD)**

SUPPORTING ACTOR

- CHRISTIAN BALE** (*THE FIGHTER*)
- MICHAEL DOUGLAS (*WALL STREET: MONEY NEVER SLEEPS*)
- ANDREW GARFIELD (*THE SOCIAL NETWORK*)
- SAM ROCKWELL (*CONVICTION*)
- GEOFFREY RUSH (*THE KING'S SPEECH*)

SUPPORTING ACTRESS

- HELENA BONHAM CARTER (*THE KING'S SPEECH*)
- MILA KUNIS (*BLACK SWAN*)
- MELISSA LEO (*THE FIGHTER*)
- JULIANNE MOORE** (*THE KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT*)
- MIRANDA RICHARDSON (*MADE IN DAGENHAM*)

may yet get a lead actress nod, but if she doesn't she'll be here too). The other three are harder to pin down, but Melissa Leo seems a dead-cert to be in there for *The Fighter* along with Helena Bonham Carter for *The King's Speech*. Mila Kunis is a possible fifth choice for *Black Swan* though she wouldn't be a favourite to win. Miranda Richardson, for Brit film *Made In Dagenham*, could also be included.

BEST FILM AND DIRECTOR

Ah, best film; the one that everyone wants to win. Oscar last year broadened the category to a ten-strong shortlist, something which hadn't been done since the early days of the ceremony. The reasons behind that decision were debated hotly and at great length. Many claimed that the anger

generated by *The Dark Knight's* lack of a nomination in 2008 ultimately lead to the expansion of the category, but could it really be as fickle a reason as that? Others claim that it's an attempt to draw in a wider audience and more interest, as (obviously) a broader range of pictures will be included that will satisfy a larger group of people. It's true that Oscar TV audience figures have been dropping significantly in recent years.

The latter point is a sticky issue. Cynics argue that the expansion of the category to ten films has simply watered down the quality of those on

**PREDICTED SHORTLISTS
(WINNERS IN BOLD)**

B E S T F I L M

- 127 HOURS
- ANOTHER YEAR
- BLACK SWAN
- INCEPTION
- THE KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT
- THE KING'S SPEECH**
- THE FIGHTER
- THE SOCIAL NETWORK
- TRUE GRIT
- TOY STORY 3

B E S T D I R E C T O R

- CHRISTOPHER NOLAN (*INCEPTION*)
- DARREN ARONOFSKY (*BLACK SWAN*)
- DAVID FINCHER (*THE SOCIAL NETWORK*)**
- MIKE LEIGH (*ANOTHER YEAR*)
- TOM HOOPER (*THE KING'S SPEECH*)

show, and while that may prove to be the case in future years (assuming the format is retained) it wasn't really the case last year. Sure, pictures such as *Inglourious Basterds* and *District 9* may not otherwise have made it into the rankings, but it's hardly a crime against cinema that they were included. Then again, you could argue (and many have) that – since neither, in reality, were worthy of the award – their presence could have been taken up by other candidates. But then that's true of the five film format as well. It all comes down to choice in the end. People can't honestly suggest that

a ten film system objectively waters down the field, though the Academy's shortlists will probably always cause rancour amongst supporters of films that don't make it. There are at least ten very good films made each year, so the problem will come from the selection rather than the format. If that's enough of an argument to have it changed back, then so be it. The best director category seems likely to alter slightly as a result of the change, however. Whereas in the past it has been possible (albeit somewhat rare) for directors whose films are not up for Best Film to win the director's award, it seems unlikely that this will happen anymore. It would smack a little of silliness if the person who won the directing award hadn't directed any of Oscar's favourite ten films of the year, wouldn't it? Whether this is negative for the directing category it's up to you to decide.

Anyway, onto the nominees. Certainties to make the ten-strong list include *The King's Speech*, obviously, *The Social Network*, *Inception*, *Toy Story 3*, *Another Year* and *Black Swan*. Of those, all but *Toy Story 3* are likely to have their respective directors nominated. *The Kids Are All Right* will almost certainly be nominated too, but Lisa Cholodenko stands almost no chance of becoming the second woman in a row (and the second of all time) to win the directing award. Films which have a good chance of making the cut, but whose directors may not make the corresponding list, are *The Fighter*, *127 Hours*, *True Grit*, *Somewhere*, *Blue Valentine* and *The Town*. If one of these directors does make the list, it will most likely be David O. Russell for *The Fighter*, though who he would replace is hard to say. Danny Boyle and the Coen brothers have both been acknowledged recently by the Academy so will probably sit this one out, while *The Town* is only Affleck's second directorial effort and, while it did receive acclaim, probably isn't a serious contender this year.

The category is perhaps a little more open that it first appears. *The King's Speech* – by virtue of its multiple





“AT VARIOUS TIMES NATALIE PORTMAN HAS BEEN LAUDED AS A DANCER IN BLACK SWAN, BUT EARLIER IN THE YEAR JENNIFER LORENZO TURN IN WINTER’S BONE AND MICHELLE WILLIAMS HAD



nominations and rave reviews – will be a strong contender and may well walk away with both Best Film and Best Director, though the Academy may yet choose to divide the two awards. *The Social Network* is a contender, but seems more likely to win a director nod for David Fincher than to win the big one. That said, it certainly hit the zeitgeist and shouldn't be ruled out. *Black Swan* may well win the Best Actress award and Aronofsky, who is swiftly making a name for himself in the mainstream, is a contender for Best Director, but *Black Swan* probably isn't as strong a contender to take home Best Film as well. *Inception* will be the word on many people's lips come award season; seeing how well it does will be interesting. It is an action film, after all, when it comes down to it. Funnily enough the film which

many claim was the catalyst for the re-introduced ten film format, *The Dark Knight*, was also directed by Nolan, and interestingly enough provided him with the clout to make *Inception*. It's brilliant, but will it take home either award? It'd be nice to see it as a genuine contender (particularly as *Memento* was cruelly overlooked in 2002), but it will struggle to pick up either and the chance of both is near impossible.

Then there's *Another Year*, Mike Leigh's well-reviewed, season-spanning drama. Leigh is a critical darling, he has been for years, and it will always be foolish to rule him out. That said I wouldn't put any money on the film winning both awards, but there's a chance it could win one or the other, most likely director. *Toy Story 3*, despite being brilliant, has the misfortune of having no real life actors on

screen, and will have to be content (as Pixar often must be) with taking home the Best Animated Feature award. At least this year the competition in the animated category is strong, with *Tangled*, *How To Train Your Dragon* and *The Illusionist* (all of which are unlucky to come up against Pixar's film) sharing 2010's animated highlights. *Wall-E* deserved to take home Best Picture in 2009 and wasn't even nominated; so while there are signs of progress and acceptance, can an animated film ever win the big prize while the animated category still exists? Ben Affleck's *The Town* might crop up but could never win, while Sofia Coppola's *Somewhere*, despite her being well-liked in Hollywood, isn't really in with a shot. Other films such as Clint Eastwood's *Hereafter* and Tony Goldwyn's *Conviction* might make vaguely surprising ap-



AS THE FAVOURITE FOR HER TURN AS A PARANOID BALLET-DANCER LAWRENCE DREW HUGE ACCLAIM FOR HER EMBATTLED CHARACTER, SHE HAS RECENTLY CREATED A STIR IN BLUE VALENTINE.”



pearances in the list but neither have a hope of taking the prize home.

AND THE REST

Although it might be fun to make predictions for every award it would also take a long time (and we'd probably get them wrong) so we'll leave it at that for 2010. Other categories are certainly interesting, however; will *Inception*, for example, have to 'settle' for technical awards? It's sure to be in the running for Original Script (where *The King's Speech* and *The Kids Are All Right* will likely crop up again), Editing, Score and Special Effects (alongside, inevitably, *Harry Potter* and *TRON: Legacy*), and it seems likely it will win one or more of these. There's a chance that another psychological thriller starring Leonardo DiCaprio

could feature in the awards to a minor extent. *Shutter Island* may well find itself nominated for sound and editing-based categories and has a chance of taking away something.

Best Foreign film is always a nuisance to predict (hence, we haven't predicted it). Last year *The Secret In Their Eyes* stole the thunder from the predicted two-man battle between *A Prophet* and *The White Ribbon*, while this year at Cannes, *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* came out as winner, which not many on-lookers had predicted. The latter is probably the strongest contender this time around, though we wouldn't put money on it. Inárritu's *Biutiful* and Xavier Beauvois' *Of Gods And Men* are also likely to be in the running.

Will *The King's Speech* sweep the board in 2011? It's beginning to look

like it might. It's unlikely to totally run away with it, but it's a strong contender in almost all of the big categories and is carrying a huge weight of approval behind it, so it will certainly take a few awards at the very least. Can David Fincher, nominated for the second year running in the director category, steal Tom Hooper's thunder? If *The King's Speech* hadn't been released in the same year, *The Social Network* would probably stand a better chance to collect more gongs. That said, it has a good chance in a couple of categories (including director and supporting actor (though Bale is favourite)) and Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross' soundtrack will almost certainly be nominated. Overall the nominees in most categories come Oscar-time will be pretty strong, reflecting what has been another good year for cinema. ♣



THE GREEN HORNET

DIRECTED BY MICHEL GONDRY STARRING SETH ROGEN, JAY CHOU, CAMERON DIAZ, CHRISTOPH WALTZ, TOM WILKINSON, DAVID HARBOUR & EDWARD JAMES OLMO

RELEASED JANUARY 14, 2011

In development hell for some time with rights to the superhero character passing between studios since 1992. With delays to Columbia Pictures' eventual production and the release pushed back from June 2010 to July, and then onto Christmas before a final release date of mid-January 2011 so it could be converted into 3-D, there's no doubting *The Green Hornet* has endured a lengthy and troublesome route to the silver screen, but here at last, it's certainly an interesting prospect.

When his father passes away after an unfortunate bee sting, Britt Reid (Rogen) is forced to reconsider his playboy lifestyle and knuckle to a serious life in charge of his father's media empire. Only when he discovers assistant Kato (Chou) has talents far beyond making remarkable cups of coffee, Britt has other ideas about how he can make his stamp on the world.

A master with a spanner in his hands, never mind karate expert and

engineer of some pretty deadly weapons, in a heavily modified Chrysler Imperial, a masked Reid and the multi-talented Kato set about cleaning up the Los Angeles streets, one crook at a time. Posing as criminals, and using Reid's newspaper to spread their name, Britt and Kato though soon attract more attention from local gangs than they had been expecting, and with tensions stretched to the limit, are in all too deep with no route out but going on the offensive again themselves.

Crafting a funny script with some great dialogue, Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg – whose previous writing credits include *Superbad* and *Pineapple Express* – might not have been the obvious choice for a superhero film, but they do a great job with the source material. Nicely balancing action with comedy, they're paired up with *Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind* director Michel Gondry to add a few creative touches, and on the whole, it's a successful collaboration.

There are certain Gondry flairs, and though it's obvious his input was mainly just at the helm of filming rather than conceptualising the production from the start, it's adequately crafted even if the narrative does lose intensity at times. It's in the middle act where the film struggles a little, feeling bloated alongside what are each snappy and well-constructed opening and closing sequences. As the story develops in the middle portion, the romantic subplots and associated

diversions appear to bog the film down and it lacks focus.

Luckily, however, plot issues don't go a great way to holding *The Green Hornet* back. Very entertaining and unabashedly fun, with a couple of great, and unexpected, cameos, there's definitely a lot to like about Gondry's latest, even for harshest of critics.

The action scenes are fast-paced and exciting, with Reid's no nonsense brute force methods comically playing off against Kato's intricate martial arts, while the chemistry between Rogen and Chou is similarly effective.

As the love interest, and new newspaper secretary, Cameron Diaz does everything asked of her but always feels slightly out of place in the role. Likewise Christoph Waltz is entertaining as image conscious villain Chudnofsky, it's just on recent form, had Nicolas Cage not dropped out over creative differences, the American actor might have made for a better foil for masked superhero team.

Held back so it could be converted into 3-D, the extra dimension is unnecessary and pointless, and in fact proves somewhat taxing on your eyes, so don't bother if there's a 2-D choice, but seemingly dumped in the Hollywood graveyard that is January of every year, *The Green Hornet* is still a surprising amount of fun, and a great evening's entertainment when you want to switch off, and dip your head in some popcorn.

★★★★★



MORNING GLORY

DIRECTED BY ROGER MICHELL **STARRING** RACHEL MCADAMS, HARRISON FORD, DIANE KEATON, PATRICK WILSON, TY BURRELL, JEFF GOLDBLUM & VANESSA ASPILLAGA

RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) JANUARY 21, 2011 (UK)

Becky (McAdams) is a prissy, neurotic workaholic – a dream employee, but a nightmare date. As producer of a suburban morning news programme, and with the unusual hours that this entails, Becky lives in a lonely cycle of BlackBerry chimes, failed dates, and take-out food. It all seems worth it with an inevitable promotion on the horizon, but when the anticipated meeting with her boss results in her dismissal rather than a new job title, Becky finds herself speechless, helpless, and jobless. After weeks of racing around Manhattan handing out resumes Becky finally lands a job as producer of *Daybreak* – a crumbling morning show at an underperforming station, assembled from a hopeless gaggle of misfits and crackpots, with an ageing, egotistical presenter at the helm, Colleen (Keaton).

Becky, determined to keep the job and improve the ratings, immediately fires Colleen's sleazy co-anchor (a move that gains her a lot of popularity) and goes in search of a cheap replacement. Her best option seems to be a horse-faced weatherman from Florida, until

she discovers that the legendary news anchor (Ford) has a year left on his contract with the station.

Pomeroy is an aloof, growling alcoholic with an abject hatred of modernity and 'sweetness', and he refuses to entertain this insufferable little girl's request. Faced with an ironclad contract, he is forced to join the tacky show, but as Becky is about to find out; you can only lead a horse to water, you can't make them drink

Becky seems to be winning people over at the station, not least the station's most eligible bachelor, Adam (Wilson); but Pomeroy refuses to do anything other than sulk on camera and deride the tetchy Colleen's credentials, and news that the show will be cancelled if ratings don't improve leaves Becky desperate for a solution. In a short space of time, Becky needs to make the show more entertaining (i.e. trashy) while also persuading the pretentious Pomeroy that the show has integrity, all the while spending more time thinking about her personal life with Adam. There is no way she can do all this on her own, so will Pomeroy come out of his cave and help the poor girl before it is too late?

Roger Michell's film is a straightforward romantic comedy, refreshingly strong on the latter and sparing with the former. This might be Becky's story, but her personal romance with Adam is sidelined in order to give Harrison Ford as much screen time as possible. Rachel McAdams is perfect in

the leading role – she is a talented and confident actress with enough experience to know that this was always going to be Ford's show. She is also, thankfully, wise enough to realise that trying to imbue Becky with attractive qualities like being demure, or mysterious, or latently sexual would never have worked. This girl is a sickly-sweet, anxious, twitching fawn who wears her heart on her sleeve; she is adorably pathetic, and McAdams pulls it off perfectly without trying to steal the film.

Ford is wonderful as the bitter, boozing hermit – he growls and moans, but there is always a playful glint in his eye and the faintest suggestion of a smile radiating through his dimples. He has been playing 'disinterested cool' since we first met the captain of the Millennium Falcon thirty years ago; and he just gets cooler with age. The only thing more entertaining than his spats with the feisty young McAdams are the catfights he shares with the deliciously mean and simpering Diane Keaton.

Michell has wisely avoided *Sex And The City* romance, or a commentary on the quality of network television, in favour of a long series of anecdotes and quick-witted arguments. *Morning Glory* is a well-structured, solid Hollywood 'movie' that will provide a bit of harmless entertainment; it is like a donut, with a bit too much sugar and not enough bran (watch the film and you'll get the reference).

★★★★★



THE FIGHTER

DIRECTED BY DAVID O. RUSSELL STARRING MARK WAHLBERG, CHRISTIAN BALE, AMY ADAMS, MELISSA LEO, MICKEY O'KEEFE, JACK MCGEE & MELISSA MCMEEKIN

RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) FEBRUARY 4, 2011 (UK)

'Irish' Mickey Ward (Wahlberg) was considered a thuggish brawler, and mocked as a 'stepping stone' fighter brought in to elevate the careers of his opponents. His older half-brother Dick Ecklund (Bale) glimpsed success when he "knocked down" Sugar Ray Leonard in 1978; but Leonard actually tripped, and still went on to win the fight by unanimous decision. Both brothers – and their mother/manager Alice (Leo) – have been choked by the pathos of that moment ever since. Dick's career declined, and by the late '80s he was happily juggling a crack addiction with his duties as Mickey's coach (while also harbouring loud desires for an imminent comeback). Their mother, Alice, was as buried in hopeless denial as her most beloved eldest son. And in the midst of all this destructive, insular melancholy, it is easy to see how Mickey's career was circling the drain.

But then something changed, and by the time Ward finally retired in 2003 he had won a WBU welterweight title and had been awarded 'Fight Of The Year' on three separate occasions by *Ring* magazine. This stunning turnaround – and the hurdles over which Ward had to jump to tackle his family and all the other social issues that had kept him in the gutter for so long – is the central focus of David O. Russell's wonderfully entertaining film.

Russell is rarely mentioned in the same breath as the other American indie 'auteurs' of his loosely defined generation. But his breakthrough success – the bizarre and loveable *Spanking The Monkey*, which followed a teenage boy on the cusp of manhood dealing with his Oedipal mother – proved his ability to portray fragile and awkward familial relationships in a surreal and unique fashion. Having dealt with everything from the Gulf War to Sartre since, *The Fighter* provides an opportunity to return to the realm of the domestic, albeit on a much larger scale.

Much of this story may seem twee and self-aggrandising (the break-ups and make-ups, etc.); but even if the plot doesn't quite stand up to factual interrogation, there is something soothing and enjoyable about hearing the story the way Dick and Mickey would tell it. The film is book-ended by interviews with the brothers (the opening shows Bale and Wahlberg in character, the final credits show real footage of Dick and Mickey) and there is a sense that we are hearing the story from their slightly deluded but wonderfully colloquial and punch-drunk perspective.

It would be remiss of me to review a boxing movie without assessing the all important fight scenes. Russell opts for a hyper-realistic portrayal of the fights, with over-exposed, grainy TV footage and re-recordings of the actual commentary and graphics from the HBO footage of the fights. The close-up blows, as is always the case in films, seem more explosive and intense than real boxing; but Ward's famous fights really were as explosive as they look in the movies. At one point during the Shea Neary title fight, commenta-

tor Jim Lampley quipped, "this is like movie fighting" (although including that particular line in the film would have been one knowing, self-referential step too far, even for the director of *I Heart Huckabees*).

Russell seems to stumble during the climactic Shea Neary fight, however, as his sharp vision falters, he slips every 'boxing movie' cliché into the sequence. There are slow-motion swings, cut-aways to worried girlfriends and even a hilarious 'double duck' as Ward dodges two punches in a style more akin to Adam West than a professional boxer. But that is all part of the charm of watching the way we would have heard it if we sat in a bar with Dick and Mickey. It is fantasised and giddy, but truthful in a way that even the most realistic of films often fail to achieve.

Melissa Leo is excellent as the hopeless and broken Alice. As the story develops we realise that she started out as a proud mother with unshakeable self-belief, but when life deals you a few too many harsh hands, self-belief quickly turns to delusion and defensive bitterness. In a place like Lowell, confronting failure can be a dangerous thing, and it is an almost existential necessity to block it out and ruthlessly protect the myth of your own making. Bale's performance is so good it almost collapses into mimicry, but his twisted and terrifyingly accurate ability to portray the quirks and simmering undertones of difficult characters ensures that his performances always transcend such claims. He is one of the few actors working in Hollywood today that elevates acting into the realm of art. His performances are windows into the souls of men.

★★★★★



TRUE GRIT

DIRECTED BY JOEL COEN & ETHAN COEN STARRING JEFF BRIDGES, MATT DAMON, JOSH BROLIN, HAILEE STEINFELD, BARRY PEPPER, DAKIN MATTHEWS & JARIATH CONROY

RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) FEBRUARY 11, 2011 (UK)

“A stranger rides into town...”; the initial spark for many of the greatest stories ever told is most recognisable as a trope of that most distinguished and iconic of genres, the Western. There has always been something of the Western in the Coen brothers’ work. However quirky and original they might appear, there are the occasional backdrops of craggy, sun-scarred canyons, the narrator with a lilting Southern drawl, or just a general sense of lawlessness and isolation. But never before have they stripped away their signature blend of dour humour and heroic pathos to create as bare, straightforward, and open-hearted a Western as *True Grit* (a remake of the 1969 John Wayne classic). Even *No Country For Old Men* was veiled with slow pacing, bizarre antagonists, and that nostrum ending.

The “stranger” whose arrival sparks our adventure is perhaps the only surprising element of the film. It is not a quick-drawing Sheriff or a lolling, drunken outlaw; but a 14-year-old girl, Mattie (Steinfeld), who has arrived to see that her father’s body is returned safely to her family home, and to ensure that the man who shot him is brought to justice. Chaney (Brolin)

has fled across the river into the lawless chaos of Chocktaw country, and few in the town would consider joining the feisty child on her mission. One man that doesn’t fit that, or any other mould, is Rooster Cogburn (Bridges) – a one-eyed drunkard who just happens to be the most ruthless US Marshall south of the Mason-Dixon line.

Another willing but troublesome ally arrives in the form of Texas Ranger LeBoeuf (Damon) – as bumbling as he is resolute – who is intent on taking Chaney back to Texas to be tried for another crime. Mattie is adamant that Chaney be hung for her father’s murder, so when Cogburn and LeBoeuf discard her with the intention of splitting the ransom money themselves, she is forced to chase them down on her startled but iron-willed pony.

While the Arkansas drunk and the spur-heeled Texan rut and thump their egos together, it falls to the beguilingly mature Mattie to act as mediator and ensure that her chaperones stick to the task. Alas, when she single-handedly discovers and attempts to contain the greasy outlaw, neither man is around to help, and Chaney’s gang quickly abduct her. Cogburn and LeBoeuf give chase, and so ensues an exciting, gun-slinging finale played out on the dusty plains of John Ford country.

If the epilogue is not an attempt at a justification, on behalf of the filmmakers, for this unusual project, it is at least an attempt to better understand their personal affection, not just for the genre, but for the very real and magical period of American history that it so passionately depicts. Rooster

and Mattie never hear from one another again until, many years later, Mattie receives a letter inviting her to visit Cogburn on tour with Wild Bill Hickok’s travelling show. Much as zoos have become less a celebration of nature than a monument to its rapid decline; so Hickok’s legendary show feels here like a melancholy, plastic replica of a time when people fought for what they cared about, and had the freedom to do so. When Cogburn passes away, Mattie has her old friend buried on the family plot. The final shot – depicting a lonely, wistful Mattie standing over the grave, below a jagged, creaking tree on a wind-swept, greying hill – is a resounding death knell to the fiery romance of the West.

Jeff Bridges effortlessly channels the whisky-weary stagger of last year’s Oscar-winning turn as *Crazy Heart*’s ‘Bad Blake’ with a less definable masochistic boredom. Cogburn is not a loveable drunk, or a hard man hiding a soft heart, he is a twisted and spiteful bastard who reluctantly carries the burden of caring about justice and innocence. But the final mention must go to the exiting and precocious talent of Hailee Steinfeld. At just thirteen years of age, she has delivered one of the most memorable performances of the year. The ‘wily and headstrong’ act does feel monotonous at times, but Steinfeld subtly exposes the chinks in Mattie’s armour. Barely moving a muscle, she momentarily reveals all the loneliness and insecurity of a lost little girl; but it is only a glimpse, and she repaints her mask, ready to do battle again.

★★★★★

TRON: LEGACY

DIRECTED BY JOSEPH KOSINSKI STARRING JEFF BRIDGES, GARRETT HEDLUND, OLIVIA WILDE, BRUCE BOXLEITNER, JAMES FRAIN, BEAU GARRETT & MICHAEL SHEEN

RELEASED OUT NOW

Joseph Kosinski's renewed and reinvigorated *TRON* is certainly one of the most eagerly anticipated films since *Avatar*, and that anticipation is largely due to the avowed cult status of Steven Lisberger's 1982 original. That film – with its mixture of archaic CGI, live action and crude hand drawn animation – is arguably the most important and innovative special effects film ever made, but its simple plot and memorable performances also rendered it an unforgettable film in the hearts of film fans who worried about the sickly smooth aesthetics of *Star Wars* and the *Rocky* films.

To impress any of the legions of eager viewers awaiting his first feature, Kosinski had to do two things: create stunning visual effects that rivalled, and hopefully surpassed, those of *Avatar*; and create a memorable, quirky, and enjoyable story to hold it all together. He has succeeded wonderfully in the former, and perhaps predictably failed dismally in the latter.

The effects are truly ravishing. The 3-D doesn't kick in until Sam (Hedlund), the son of disappeared computer genius Kevin Flynn (Bridges), is transported into The Grid – a cyber-world created by Flynn, in which he has been trapped for the past 20 years. Over the space of those 20 years, the rudimentary, almost analogue, neon minimalism of the original film's alternate reality has evolved over countless 'cycles' to produce a world so rich in glassy texture and sleek quicksilver cities that it more closely resembles a futuristic vision of earth than a more abstract idea of a 'cyber world' based

on 0s and 1s. Kosinski's background in architecture is clear – The Grid is a stunning futuristic vision, a cross between Philip K. Dick and the Bauhaus. Kosinski was determined to honour the original film by avoiding complete reliance on CGI, so many of the sets are tangible, created out of concrete and glass, and you can feel their weight on the screen.

But is this an entirely positive point? This is supposed to be a vision of a 'cyber world' created entirely out of digital programmes. It necessarily needs to be anthropomorphised in order to be understood as a 'mythic' story, but is the chic interior design and the hog roast dinner entirely necessary? When Sam arrives on The Grid he is disrobed and prepared by four android-like 'sirens', and he later bumps into one of them as she is finishing her shift and leaving "the office" with an umbrella. What exactly is she protecting herself from in this instance? Cyber rain? There is something disappointingly easy about this interpretation of The Grid, which in the original film was a much more abstract space simply due to the limitations of technology. The wonders of the modern world have allowed Kosinski to render a truly outstanding vision on screen, but whether it is the right vision or the honest vision for *TRON* is debatable.

Two unquestionable triumphs should be mentioned though: the first is Daft Punk's glitchy, techno score. Their infectious, cosmic dance-pop is a perfect fusion of the organic and the 'technologic'. It is at once cold and monotonous yet energised and vibrant. The second is the most important element of the *TRON* idyll... the disk battles and light cycles of legend are absolutely stunning, taking place in gigantic stadia before enormous crowds of baying 'programmes'. The glistening quicksilver appearance of the bikes' trails is breathtaking in 3-D, and the battles themselves are easily as thrilling as anything James Cameron has

ever created. They commend the film on their own, regardless of the success, or lack thereof, of the overall story.

The story, alas, falls in between the cracks of the wonderful aesthetic choices. The evolution of The Grid has been plagued by the controlling, cancerous influence of Clu – a 'programme' built by Flynn in his own image to create a 'perfect world' on The Grid, while he was busy battling corporations in the real world. Clu's pursuit of a non-existent ideal has led to a dangerous and dark world of dogma, destruction, and genocide. Sam's unlikely arrival provides a brief opportunity for Flynn to defeat Clu and escape The Grid, and so the fight is on. This could have been a halfway interesting story, but it really is not. Essentially the story involves father and son, and Flynn's adopted cyber-daughter Quorra, travelling across a barren landscape and getting into a few fracas before, well, winning. Somehow this random trip provides Sam with the cathartic, epiphanic inspiration he needed to "find himself" and turn his life around upon returning to the real world. This is like a 'sci-fi action epic' jus – a boiling pot of *Gladiator*, *Star Wars*, and *The Matrix* left on a high heat until all that is left is a sickly syrup of clichés and half-baked ideas.

The acting unfortunately, fails to save the piece. Jeff Bridges does nothing wrong as Flynn or, thanks to some wonderful visual effects, in his younger incarnation as Clu. But there has never been any doubt that Bridges' talent lies in subtle and sincere character studies, rather than sci-fi epics. Garrett Hedlund is inoffensive as Sam, but he is either too young to too incapable of finding a way to save his vacuous character's journey by adding some intangible dimension of emotional honesty. In the end, this is a travesty of a story and a failure of a sequel, but an absolute triumph for CGI; it is to the original *TRON* what *Avatar* is to *Ferngully*.

★★★★★





THE TOURIST

DIRECTED BY FLORIAN HENCKEL VON DONNERSMARCK
STARRING JOHNNY DEPP, ANGELINA JOLIE, PAUL BETTANY,
 TIMOTHY DALTON, STEVEN BERKOFF & RUFUS SEWELL

RELEASED OUT NOW

Let's not mince words; *The Tourist* is one of the most outstandingly atrocious films of the year. It is so unbelievably bad that we must surely assume von Donnersmark and co-writer McQuarrie (who brought us *The Lives Of Others* and *The Usual Suspects* respectively) have done this purposefully and in a knowing fashion. The plotlines, performances, camerawork, and shoddy effects are terrible; and yet there is some strange enjoyment to be had out of all this pomp and cheese, and it doesn't feel like an accident.

From the moment Elise (Jolie) appears on screen – in a cream gown and fur lifted from *Breakfast At Tiffany's* – we are transported to a shimmering realm of 1950's glare and colour where subtlety and originality have been obliterated. This is what an espionage thriller would look like if Jerry Bruck-

heimer were staring at *The 39 Steps* through Gene Kelly's View-Master. Elise is racing through Gare du Lyon to catch the 8:22 train; and we know this because we hear her voice-over explaining that she needs to catch the 8:22 train, and then we see a close-up of the departure board advertising the 8:22 train, and then we see Paul Bethany – a bitter and overworked British agent – using some of Bruckheimer's patented 'neon-blue-computer-stuff' technology to piece together a ripped-up note revealing that his target is getting the 8:22 train. Alexander MacKendrick would be proud, but anybody born after 1953 will be yawning and/or laughing.

When a modern Pendolino train shows up at the platform it feels as though an alien spaceship has crashed into post-war Lyon; but Elise doesn't waste any time in her mission to find a man that has the same height and build as her mystery accomplice (as her voice-over explains to us), dragging him to the suitably art deco dining car for the duration of the journey. The hapless chap whose life is about to be torn apart, simply because he has the same height and build as a criminal, is Frank (Depp) – a maths teacher from

Wisconsin who smokes an electric cigarette and reads spy novels.

When they arrive in Venice (where else could this film be set?), Frank finds himself escaping from Interpol and Russian mafia who all believe him to be Alexander Pearce; and when Elise rescues him from the jaws of death she finally admits that she has been using him as a foil to protect her lover, who has stolen billions from the gangsters and is wanted by MI5.

She tries to send Frank home, but the forlorn traveller, with his sad-puppy eyes and glass jaw, refuses to flee from the woman he loves (he has fallen in love by the way). Queue an epic climax where all the various parties descend on a sparkling Venetian ball and fight it out. Oh, and there's a gigantic and jaw-dropping twist too; you'll never see it coming.

Some early reviews have called this a 'turkey', but those reviewers can't possibly have appreciated the Ealing-throwback chivalry of the whole enterprise. This isn't quite a comedy (it isn't *Carry On...*) but it goes beyond Hollywood 'tongue-in-cheek' trashiness to provide a sleek and thoughtful rubbish film that earns its laughs.

★★★★★



TANGLED

DIRECTED BY NATHAN GRENO & BYRON HOWARD

STARRING MANDY MOORE, ZACARY LEVI, DONNA MURPHY, RON PERLMAN, M.C. GAINNEY & JEFFREY TAMBOR

RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) JANUARY 28, 2011 (UK)

Tangled is a modern day reminder that long before Pixar, Disney ruled (and birthed) the animated picture. Now Disney owns Pixar (which is neither here nor there; the studios still work independently) but of late Pixar has had the edge over their forebears by quite some margin. Thankfully, *Tangled* – fittingly Disney's 50th animated feature – represents a triumphant return to form for the House of Mouse, and is a genuine delight.

Last year's *The Princess And The Frog* was well-received in general by critics, and on paper looked the more likely candidate to reawaken the magic of Disney, but this adaptation of the Rapunzel fairytale is everything we've come to expect from the classic era(s) of Disney animation; thrilling, funny, touching, it's a fantastic family film.

Tangled updates rather than modernises the classic story of Rapunzel, and thankfully avoids going down the route of pop-culture references (which initially invigorated but eventually stifled the *Shrek* franchise), choosing instead to make the references to modern day life subtle and understated. In this version of the story, Rapunzel's hair is imbued with a magical quality

that has the power to heal and, more importantly, restore youth. It is this latter that causes Mother Gothel (villain of the piece) to kidnap Rapunzel and lock her up in a tower, raising her as her daughter, ostensibly out of love but in reality for the powers contained within the young girl's hair. But when a charismatic thief stumbles upon the hidden tower, Rapunzel will finally get her chance to see the outside world she has dreamed about.

Mandy Moore (as Rapunzel) and Zachary Levi (as Flynn Ryder, her 'rescuer') prove irresistibly charming company. Their faultless voice work is helped a great deal – as is everything else in the film – by frankly breathtaking animation. The film is visually dazzling, both artistically and from a technical standpoint. Everything from Rapunzel's seemingly endless locks to the subtlest movements of the characters faces and clothing is rendered brilliantly. It really does hark back to the days when nobody bar nobody did this stuff better than Disney. This is Disney's first CGI picture that will really knock your socks off simply because of the way that it looks.

All of that would mean nothing without substance, however, and the film has plenty of that to boot. Aside from our two leads, a host of supporting characters add flavour and variety to the action. Flynn, having stolen from the castle, is being chased down by the old-school captain of the guard, whose horse Maximus (voiceless but wonderfully expressive) provides a great deal of the film's many laughs.

He also proves (along with Rapunzel's chameleon friend Pascal) that the intrinsic hilarity of animated animals with physical ticks is far from losing its effectiveness. Mother Gothel, unfortunately, is not the strongest villain in Disney's long canon. Her motives are interesting but she is let down a little by what is one of the film's few weaknesses: the songs. There is nothing bad in here, but musical set-pieces such as her early 'mother knows best' song (beautifully and imaginatively set to a theme of darkness and light) don't quite work as well as they might. Later, a sojourn to a pub filled with dangerous brigands threatens another weak musical number, but soon explodes into a fun-filled dream-themed montage which ends up being one of the stronger musical moments. The film's most romantic moment (genuinely moving) is also let down a little by its lyrical endeavours, but still remains a visual and emotional standout.

Picking fault with the songs feels harsh, though, because while they aren't Disney's strongest efforts, the whole thing is so likable that you'd be hard pressed to let it bother you too much. Once things get going, the film is perfectly-paced and so easy to like that you'll forget little niggles. Pixar have rightly been getting most of the animated plaudits in recent years, but *Tangled* serves as a welcome reminder that before Pixar there was another animation house that led the pack; here's hoping that this is the start of a new generation of Disney excellence.

★★★★★



RABBIT HOLE

DIRECTED BY JOHN CAMERON MITCHELL STARRING NICOLE KIDMAN, AARON ECKHART, DIANNE WIEST, MILES TELLER, TAMMY BLANCHARD, SANDRA OH & GIACARLO ESPOSITO

RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) FEBRUARY 4, 2011 (UK)

David Lindsay-Abaire adapts his own acclaimed stage play in *Rabbit Hole*, a convincing drama produced by and starring Nicole Kidman.

We join our two leads Becca and Howie (Nicole Kidman and Aaron Eckhart) eight months after the death of their four-year-old son. Their relationship is fracturing, but not broken, and in general the two are trying to get on with their lives, trying to ignore the fact that the sadness is still very real. Director John Cameron Mitchell floats us down into this setup without fireworks or showboating; we're simply there in a believable household, watch-

ing events unfold.

It is this subtlety that becomes the film's strength. Although the film has been heralded as an awards-baiting project, this comes more from its qualities than from an undeserved attempt to win awards. On the contrary, *Rabbit Hole* doesn't resort to histrionics in order to get its point across; in general this is a poised, mature drama about loss that also isn't afraid to raise a dark eyebrow in humour when it feels the need.

Mitchell's direction is gentle and uses few visual flourishes, though a couple of shots in which Kidman looks down into the camera linger effectively. His unflustered style is backed up by Anton Sanko's gentle score, which refuses to take any opportunities to soar into orchestral mode (just as well; it would've felt out of place), choosing instead to focus on subtly tinkling ivories and acoustic guitar.

The film's refreshingly believable central relationship (maintained ad-

mirably until the conclusion) is played very well by Kidman and Eckhart. Their performances create a homely dynamic that is obviously stilted by their loss but crucially, while we watch them, we believe that they once had closeness. Their grief is expressed more through words than through fits of tears or blazing rows, a sensible choice which is given more heft by strong supporting turns from Diane Wiest (as Becca's mother) and Tammy Blanchard (as her sister).

The film's pacing, too, is good. It runs to barely an hour and a half and feels just right for a character study. Thankfully for a film that deals with tragedy, it is not a chore to watch, and neither is it depressing or sentimental; a tricky balance that cast and crew have done well to find. One slow motion flashback sequence is perhaps a little distracting, but this is a strong effort with good lead performances and a satisfying conclusion.

★★★★★



LOVE AND OTHER DRUGS

DIRECTED BY EDWARD ZWICK STARRING JAKE GYLLENHAAL, ANNE HATHAWAY, OLIVER PLATT, HANK AZARIA, JOSH GAD, GABRIEL MACHT, JUDY GREER & KATE JENNINGS GRANT

RELEASED OUT NOW

Released in the States at the peak of the Oscar season, perhaps *Love And Other Drugs* had high intentions, but despite its two A-lister leading names, it's more of a standard rom-com-drama at heart, but then that's not necessarily a problem.

Jamie Randall (Gyllenhaal), an ambitious pharmaceutical salesman, is probably the biggest charmer you'll ever meet. After getting sacked from his job in a hi-fi store because he got a little too close to the boss' girlfriend, though he was making a decent living off commission alone, when his brother suggests he goes into selling pharmaceuticals for Pfizer, he has to step his game up another notch.

Shadowing a highly regarded local doctor (Azaria), all the while pushing Pfizer's products for the practice, Jamie meets Maggie Murdock (Hathaway), a stage one Parkinson's sufferer, whom he becomes more than a little fascinated by. After winning her over

proves more difficult than Jamie is used to, Maggie starts to slowly open up and reveal the impact her illness is having deeper into her life. Soon the pair develop a bond neither had expected, but when their relationship reaches a point that Jamie would be sacrificing a lot to care for Maggie, and Maggie asking so much of Jamie to do it, whether they can stick it out is a question even beyond that of love.

A big departure from his usual action, *Love And Other Drugs* is only director/co-screenwriter Edward Zwick's second comedy-drama, the first being his debut *About Last Night...*, and on the whole, he again handles the genre well. The romantic angle isn't overbearing and blends in nicely with Jamie's salesman plot, although as each find a resolution, the narrative feels a little lopsided. Taking much of the film to build up the relationship, *Love* doesn't seem to spend much time within it, and somewhat under explores her Parkinson's suffering, though on the flipside, this saves the film's mostly light-hearted nature.

The story, or more so that of the book upon which it was based (*Hard Sell: The Evolution Of A Viagra Salesman*), pits Randall as moving onto selling Viagra (which as the films draws to a swift close, doesn't massively impact on events), and though that would suggest a certain degree of nudity and sexual content, the sex scenes are surprisingly bold, and Hathaway surprisingly forthcoming to taking off

her clothes. The cynic inside you might argue the nudity masks a gritty edge the film would have otherwise been lacking, but that isn't a huge problem.

For the first time in a while, Gyllenhaal puts in a commendable shift, while Anne Hathaway is always effortlessly watchable, even here when dealing with her troubling condition. Her character is warm but conflicted and she copes aptly with the frailties placed on Maggie. Opposite, Gyllenhaal pulls off the 'get all the ladies' charmer act without coming across as a jerk, which is commendable, and he adds steel and depth to Jamie later on.

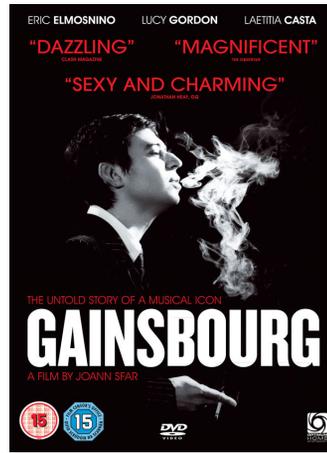
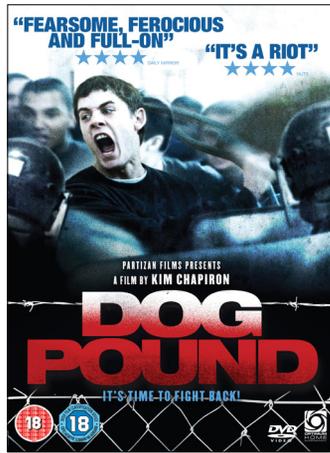
For all it's hard work, however, sadly the film is wholly undermined by some awful soundtracking, or at least on the two all-important emotional scenes. The clichéd, over-bearing slow ballad placed over the top of each heartfelt moment completely kills the atmosphere, further ridiculing the tone and nature of the narrative as a whole. With the change of pace into these scenes already so evident (*Love And Other Drugs* runs at near break-neck-speed throughout the rest of the picture), the schmaltzy ballad feels like running into a brick wall and is a blot on a story that otherwise felt fairly fresh, in a genre so prone to repetition. The relationship still feels genuinely in danger at times, and, at others, full of life but still unpredictable, it just could have been so much more, if only it wasn't for that damn track choice.

★★★★★

DOG POUND

Though it follows the rigid prison drama set-up, *Dog Pound* effectively transports you into the Enola Vale juvenile offenders institute, a place where kids are left to fend for themselves in an atmosphere of high tension.

Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



GAINSBOURG

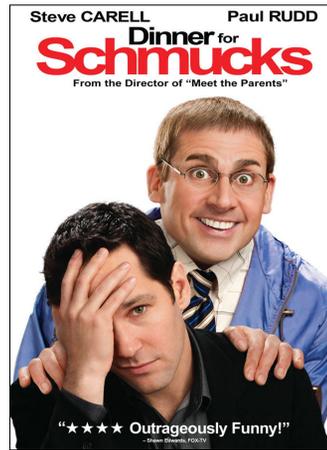
Exploring the life of French singer Serge Gainsbourg; growing up in Nazi-occupied Paris to his musical days and latter death, director Joann Sfar provides a fascinating and refreshing perspective on this enigmatic icon.

Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★

THE SOCIAL NETWORK

Only from David Fincher could the founding of Facebook be absorbing; *The Social Network* chronicles the lawsuits and betrayal of the early days of the world's most popular website. Stunning work again from Fincher.

Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



DINNER FOR SCHMUCKS

Surprisingly funny comedy as finance exec. Tim Conrad has to find a freak to take to his boss' dinner, only when his newfound friend means more to Tim than he first expected, he struggles to follow through on the evening out.

Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★

GROWN UPS

Dreadful buddy-comedy as five old high school friends go away for a holiday weekend, families in tow. The script is tired and lazy with barely a single laugh during the entire film, even Sandler fans should avoid.

Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



I'M STILL HERE

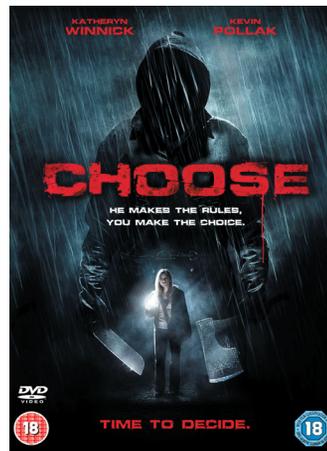
Mockumentary birthed by Joaquin Phoenix as he gives up acting to start a career as a rap artist. Heartbreaking towards the end, while saying a lot about public perception, *I'm Still Here* is somewhat brilliant and very effective.

Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★

F

Self-styled 'hoodie horror' as a group of teachers come under attack in their own school from a gang of murderous kids. Mindless fun in theory, in practice, *F* is sadly tiresome and uninvolved; disappointing on the whole.

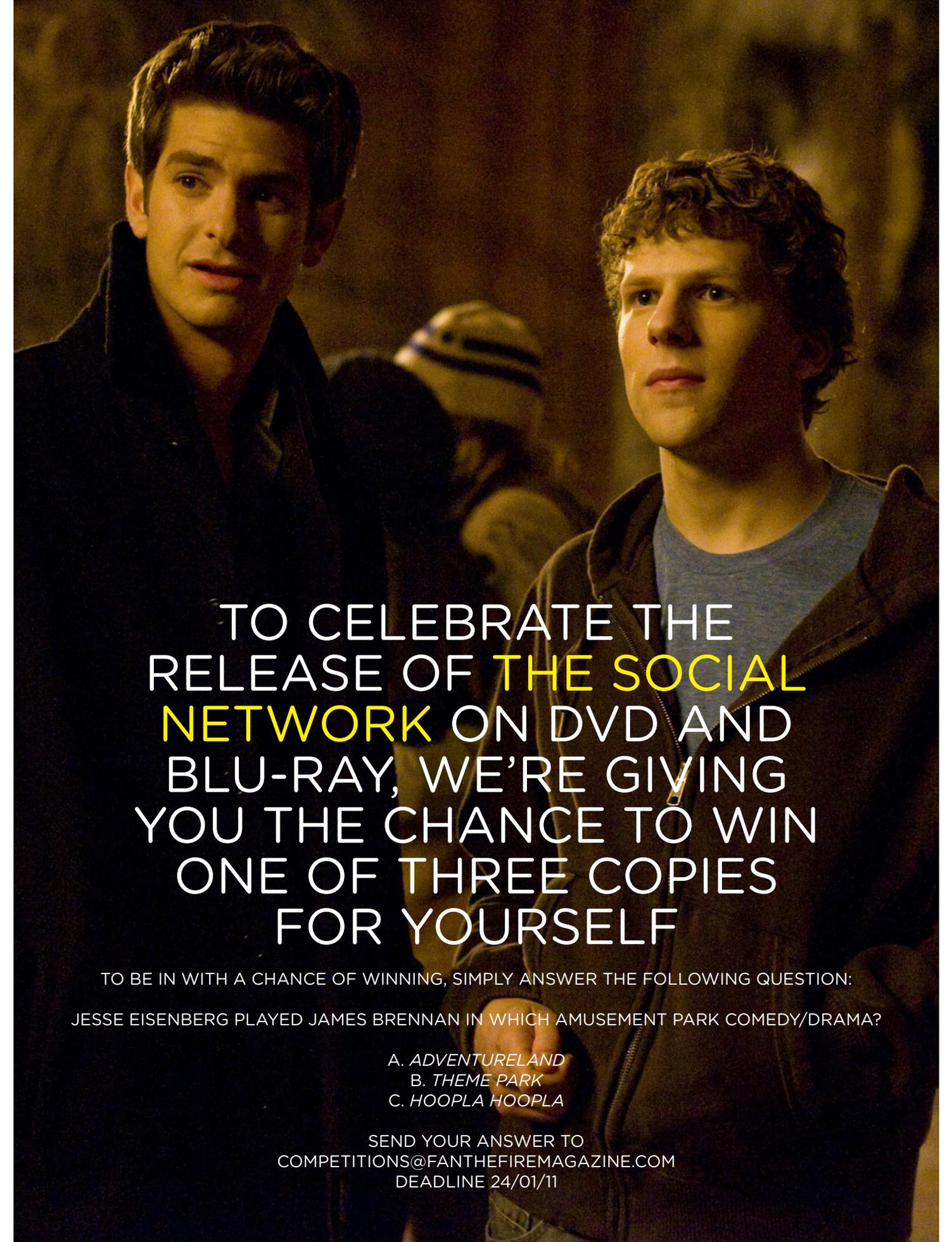
Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



CHOOSE

Promising slasher that unfortunately delves into Saw-like dilemmas one too many times and fails to deliver on the finale, Kathryn Winnick though puts in a good performance even if the direction lets the film down.

Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



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SIXES AND SEVENS
BY SEAN MARC LEE

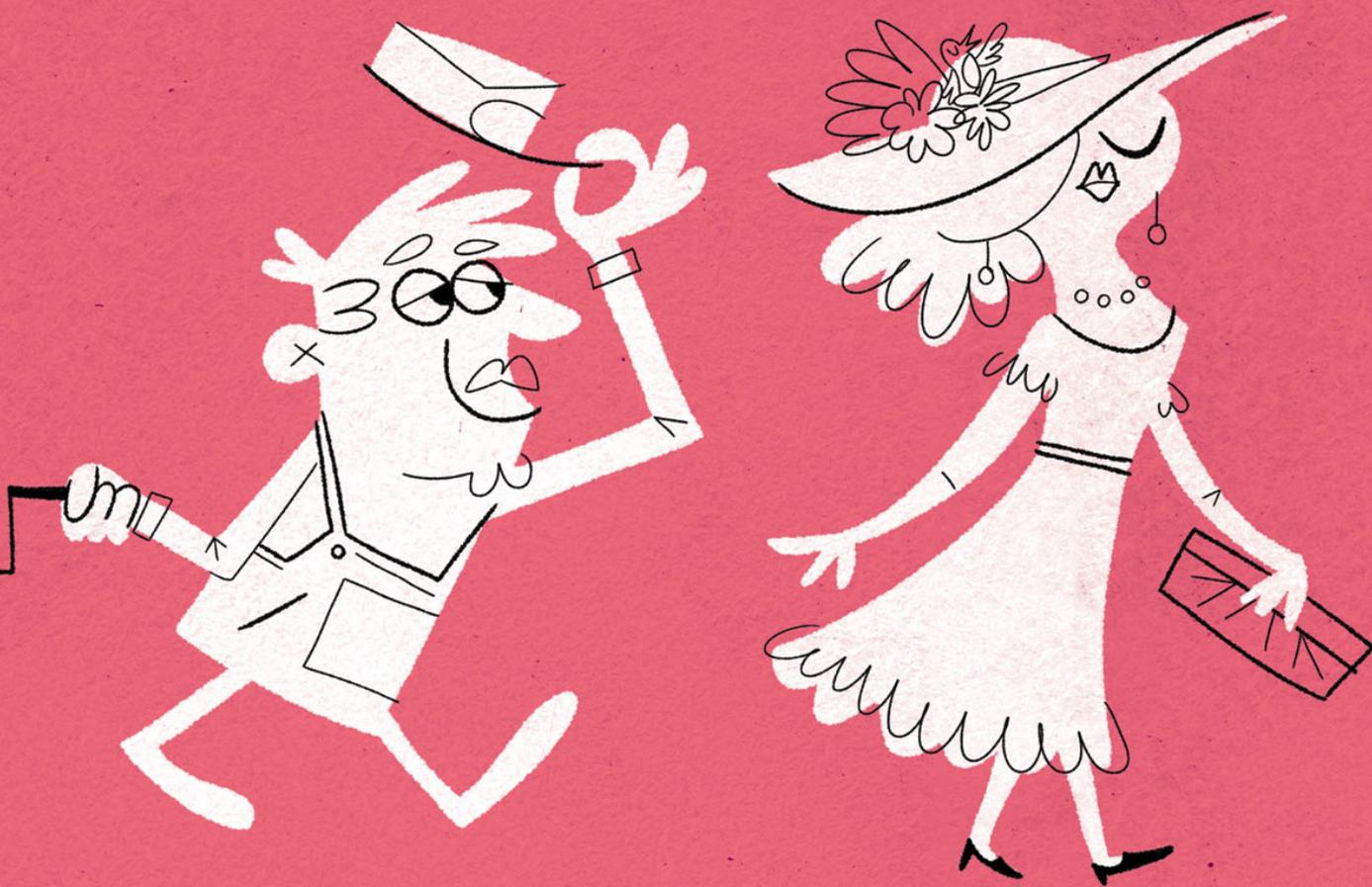


THIS HOUSE IS NOT
A CIRCUS BY SLIP

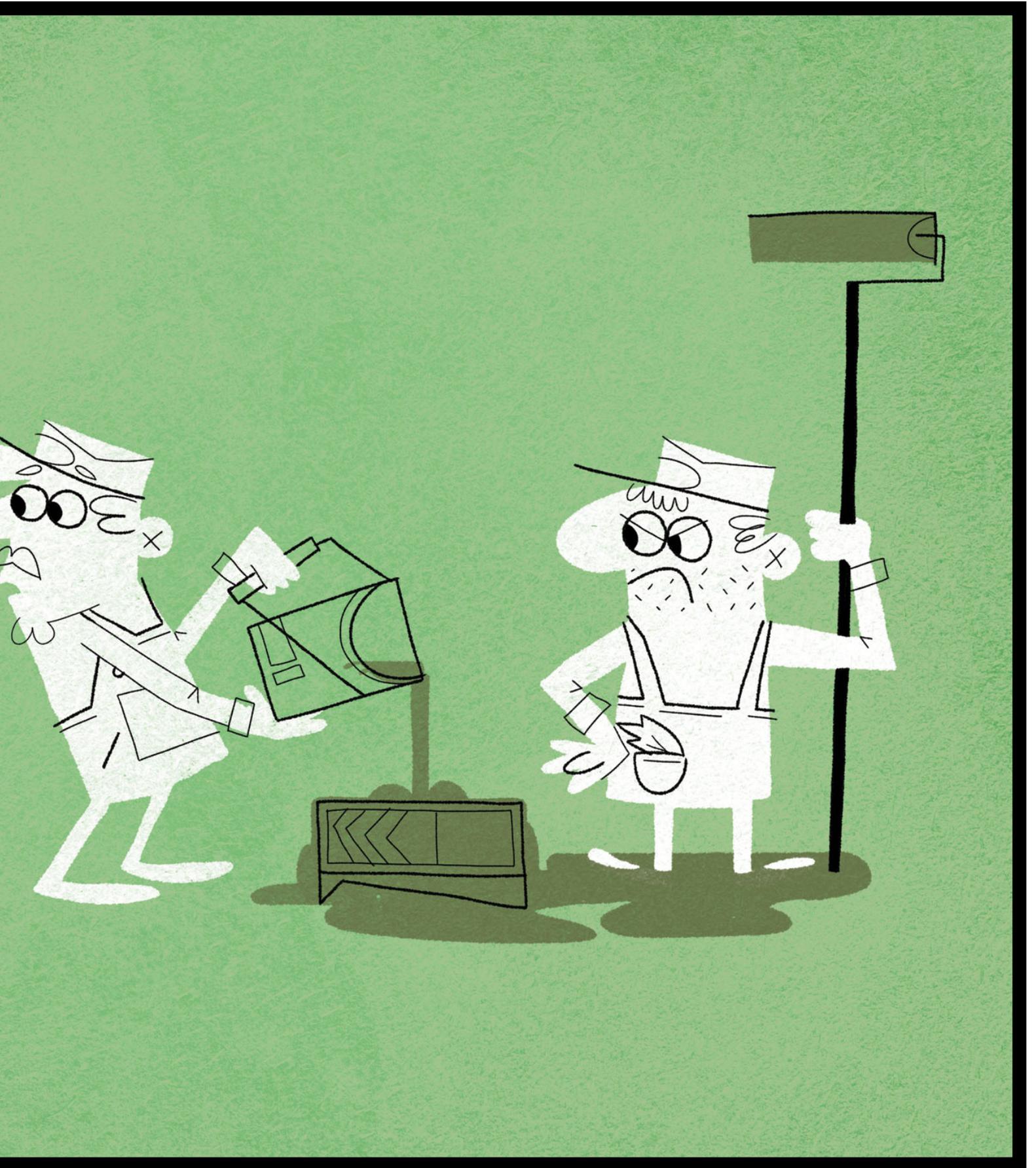
PAS DE CHEVAL

ILLUSTRATIONS ANDREW KOLB (KOLBISNEAT.COM)











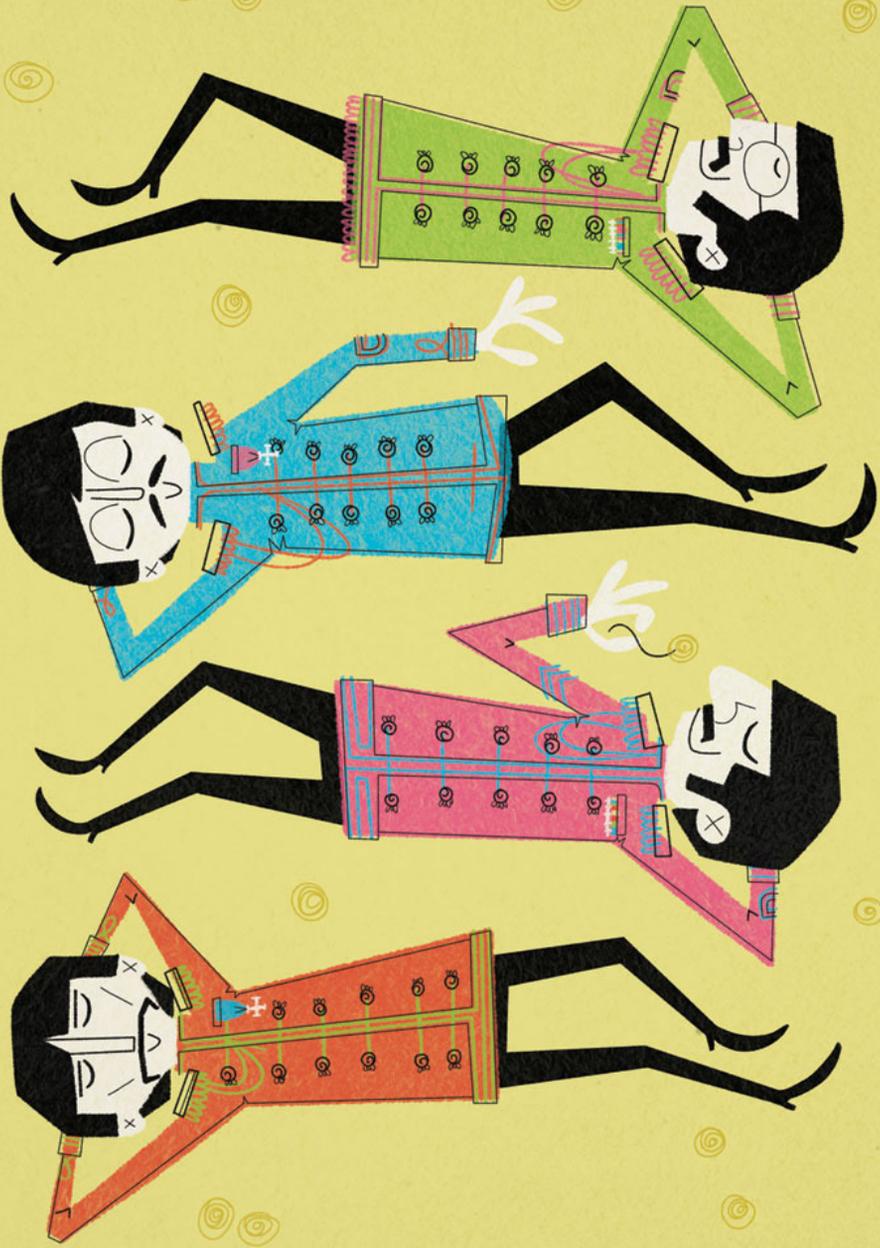
THE WALKING DEAD

SUNDAYS 10•9C

amc

















kolb





***SAVE
YOURSELF,
I'LL HOLD
THEM BACK***

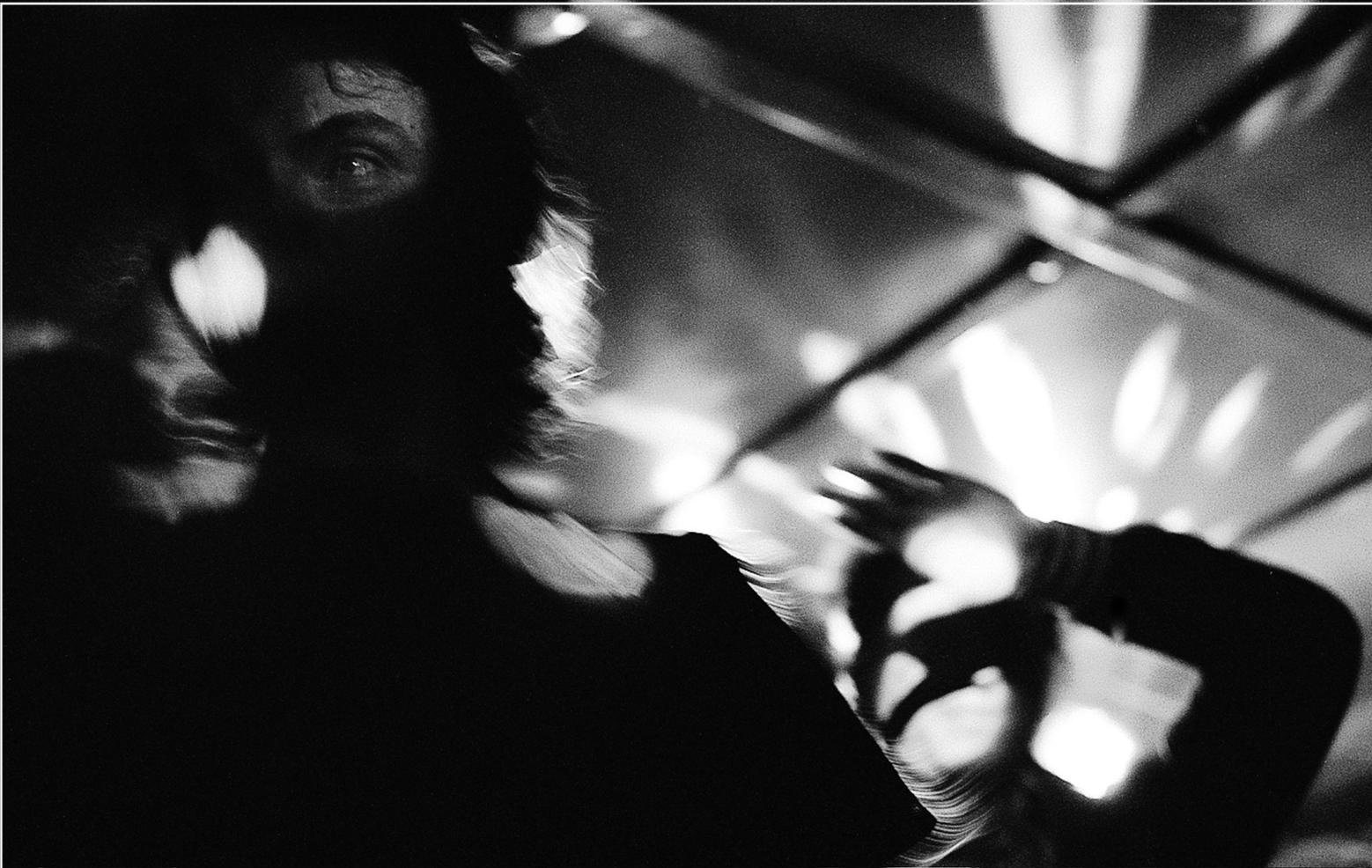
PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN BATTAGLIA (JOHNSITE.COM)











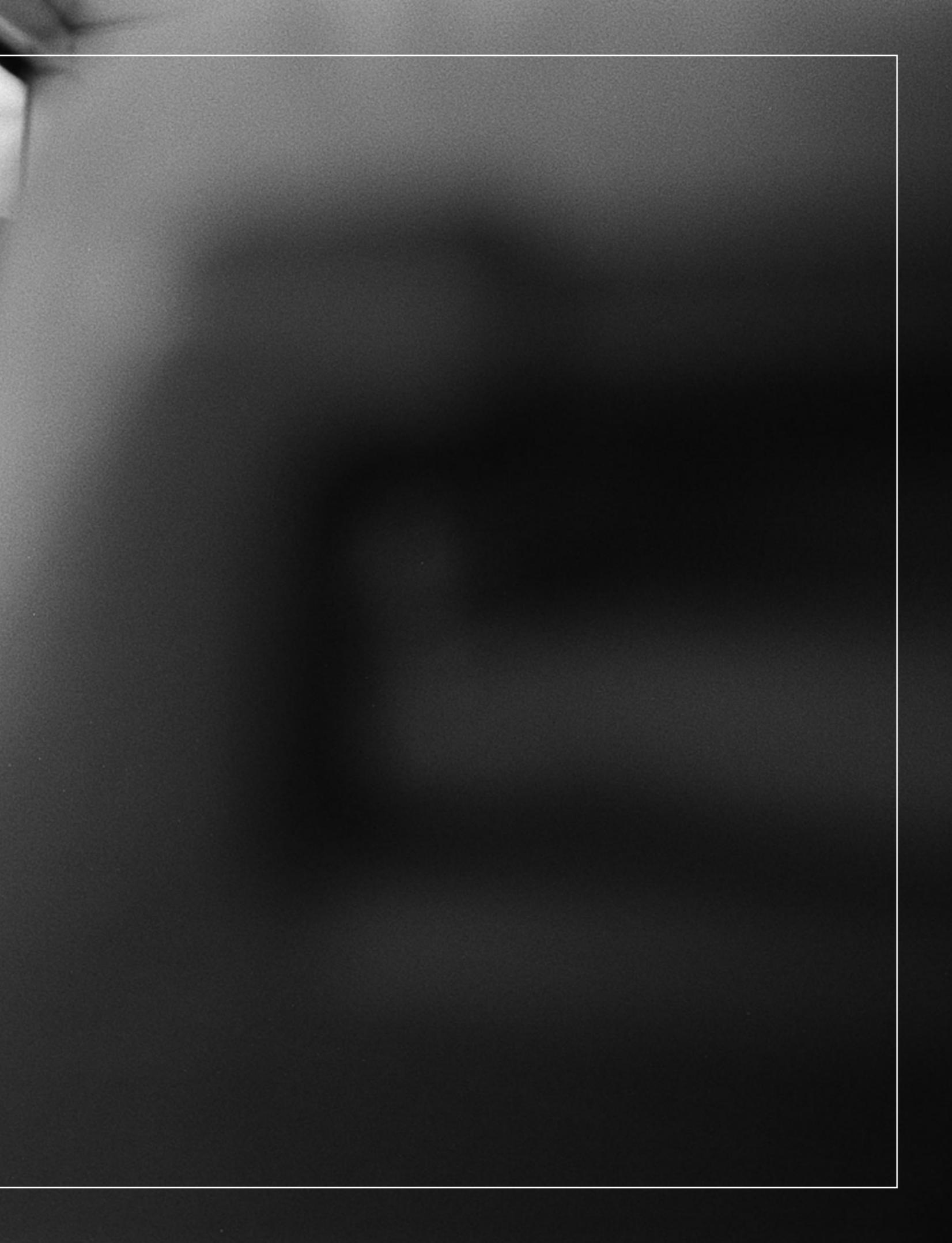






ПОРУЧНИ













Sixes and sevens

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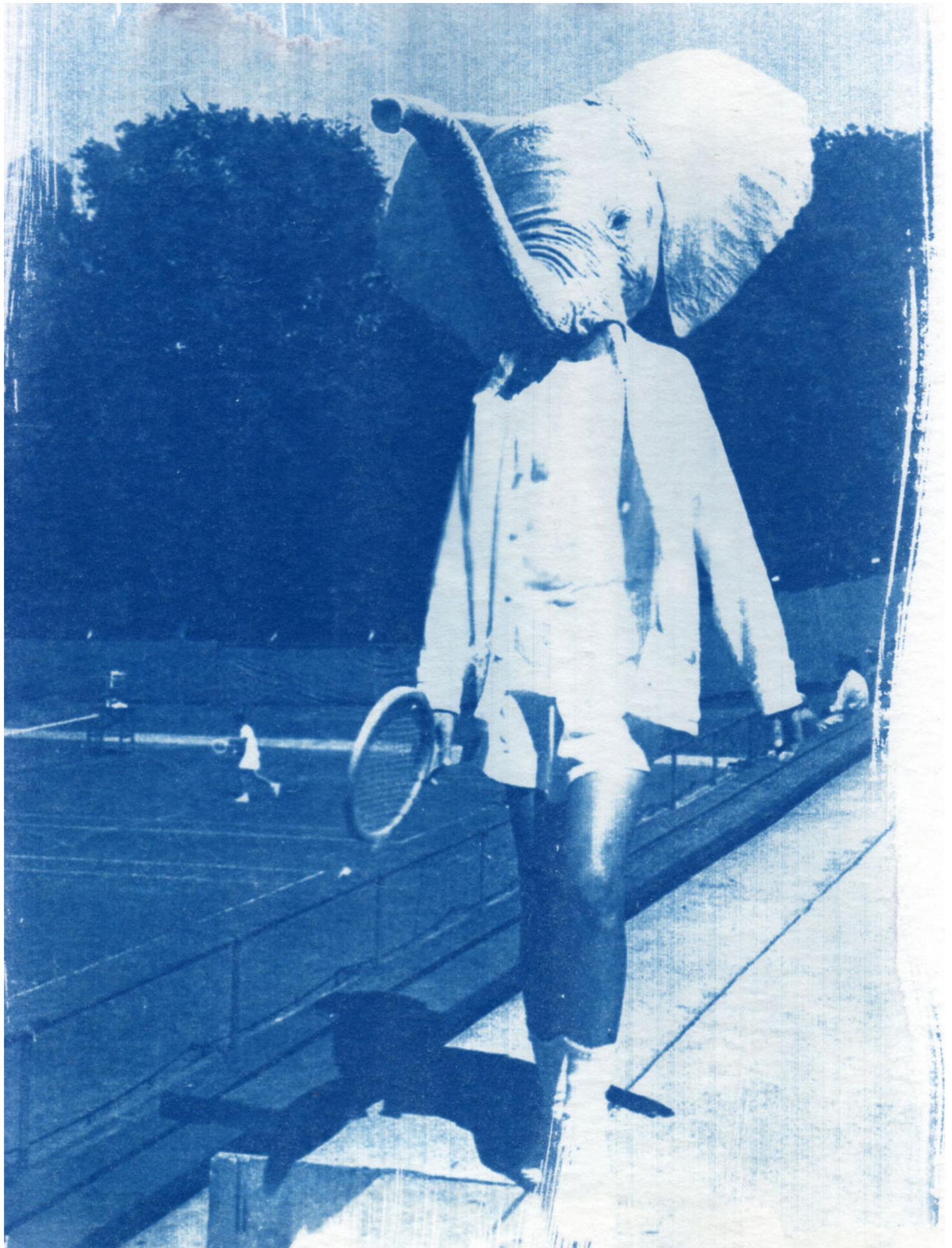




***This
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circus***

COLLAGES SLIP (SYLVAIN.COTTE.FREE.FR)



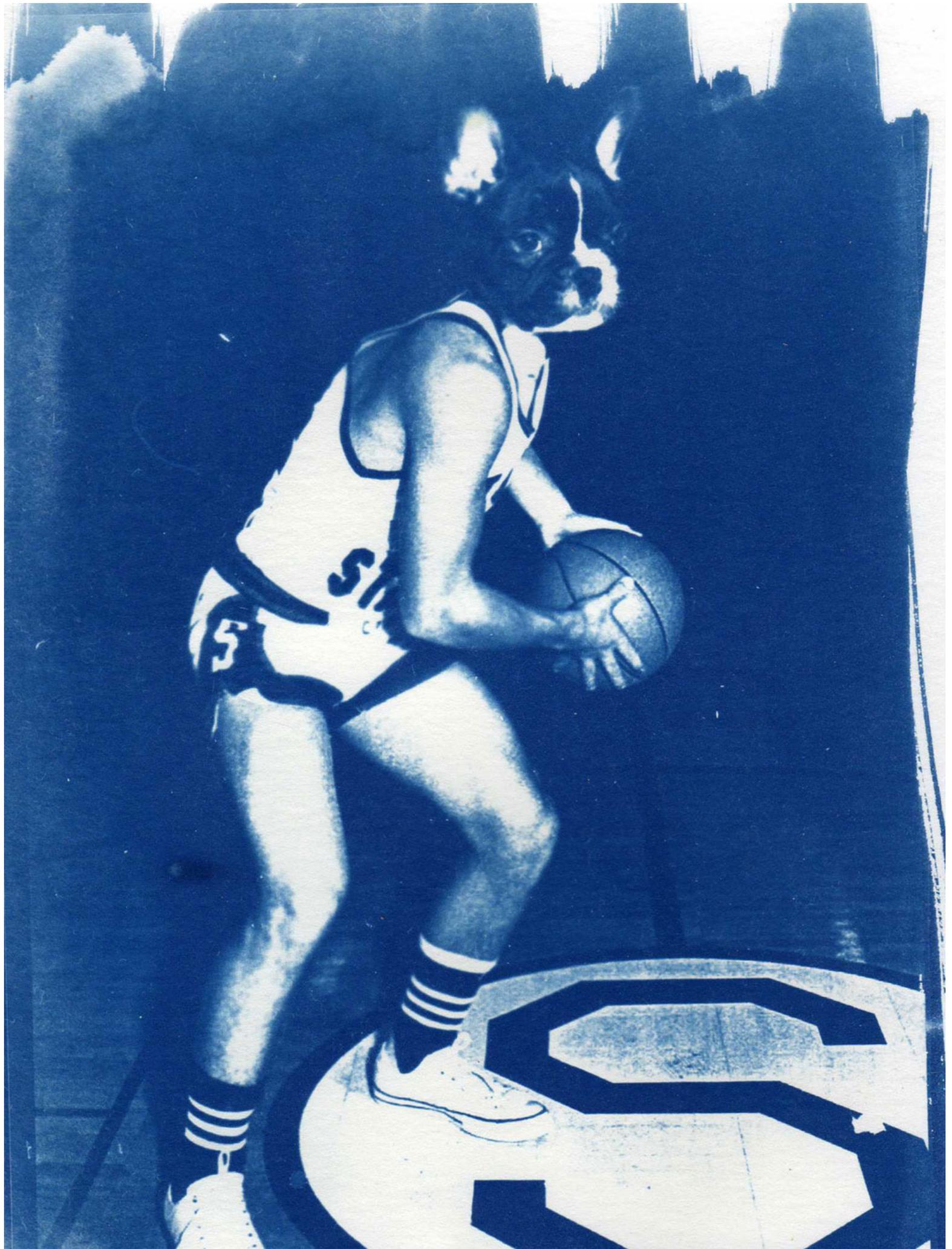


























STYLE



PARTY POISON
BY EUDES DE SANTANA



SATURDAYS=YOUTH
BY IGOR TERMENON



SILVER SOUL
BY MIKAEL RAMIREZ



THANK YOU FOR THE
VENOM BY RORY DCS

PARTY POTSON

PHOTOGRAPHY EUEDES DE SANTANA (EUEDESANTANA.COM)

STYLING CÁSSIA CAMPOS

MAKE-UP & HAIR IRA MAKE UP

MODEL JUDITH POSADA (MIAH MANAGEMENT)

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HALTRUP & PAULA RODRÍGUEZ

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STYLE





Silver soul

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THANK
YOU FOR
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VENOM

































A photograph of a person's hand and arm reaching out to touch a large, weathered log. The person is wearing a colorful, patterned sweater. The background shows a wooded area with grass and fallen leaves. The text "NEXT ISSUE AVAILABLE JANUARY 28" is overlaid in a white, outlined font.

NEXT ISSUE
AVAILABLE
JANUARY 28



