

FAN TV FIRE

ISSUE #40 // FEBRUARY 2011

HAPPYTHANKYOU-
MOREPLEASE,
PAUL & HEREAFTER
FILM REVIEWS

STYLE BY ISA
JACOB & MAGNUS
ÖSTERHULT

NO NOISE
POLLUTION
A CALL TO ARMS
FOR OFTEN
FORGOTTEN GENRE
ROCK N' ROLL

MASTER &
COMMANDER

WE CHAT TO DONALD
SUTHERLAND ABOUT NEW
FILM THE MECHANIC AND
HIS ESTEEMED CAREER IN
HOLLYWOOD

LYKKE LI & MEN
ALBUM REVIEWS

LINUS MORALES SHOWS OFF HIS DARK SIDE

THE GHOST OF YOU

ART BY FLORIAN TREMP
& PETER GARFIELD

KURRAN & THE
WOLFNOTES

The game has changed



It's strange to call a film or album the 'best' of the year, because really, there are so many levels upon which media can be great. When we compiled our list last month, *The Town* won out for movies, and *Champ* by Tokyo Police Club for music, but certainly *The Town* didn't come close to the major awards at the Oscars (bar a supporting actor nomination for Jeremy Renner), and don't expect the Canadian indie band to be taking home a Grammy this year.

With the Oscars especially, there's a marked difference between the technical and filmmaking grandeur they reward and what some might consider much more entertaining films, but as, at the end of the day, we watch films to be entertained, which is the better movie?

The reason the Oscar nominations for Best Picture expanded to 10 films

last year was to try and accommodate this very problem, and if *Inception* had missed the cut for the upcoming ceremony, there would have been widespread disdain, with Nolan's movie largely considered one of the very best in 2010 by the viewing masses.

I guess this is the real problem; the gulf between the classic 'critic', and Joe Public. We try not to get too bogged down with French auteurs, mise-en-scene and neorealism, attempting to blur the gap between what are often deemed a snooty bunch (and to be honest, a lot of the 'Guardian types' are), we like both the classics, and *Transformers*. And if you doubted our credentials as a serious voice in the culture world, try joining the critics' circle on Rotten Tomatoes then get back to us.

There's a new breed of media,

which, undoubtedly has been around for a while, but is still taking its time to truly break through. A few years ago we were frequently the only critics at press screenings under the age of 40, and every time, the only representative from an online-only publication. Of course it's a completely different story now (though we're still often amongst the freshest of face), and online criticism is starting to really catch up to its printed brethren.

Digital can be innovative in more ways than print can ever dream of. And not just because it's built in 1s and 0s. Welcome to a risk-taking world that's starting to become the mainstream, and the time is now to power it home.

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

New issues

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

Download on-the-go

Find a nearby WiFi hotspot and download from anywhere, there's no need for a PC

Back issues

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

Video

Check out the latest film trailers and music tracks with embedded content

Updates

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

& much more

Coming soon to

the iPad app store



FAN THE FIRE
RECORDS
presents



FRIDAY
NIGHT
FIST
FIGHT
.COM

FRIDAY NIGHT FIST FIGHT

LAST FRIDAY OF
EVERY MONTH AT
CATCH, LONDON

ARTWORK BY
CESAR MORENO

February 2011

MUSIC

INTERVIEW

16 Kurran And The Wolfnotes

FEATURES

18 Rock N' Roll: A Call To Arms
20 The Strokes

ALBUM REVIEWS

21 Album round-up, including Lykke Li and MEN

FILM

PREVIEWS

24 I Am Number Four
26 Source Code
28 The Eagle
30 Bridesmaids
32 Battle: Los Angeles
34 Super 8

INTERVIEWS

36 Donald Sutherland
38 Peter Mullan

REVIEWS

40 Happythankyou-
moreplease
41 Inside Job
42 Barney's Version
43 No Strings Attached
44 A Turtle's Tale:
Sammy's Adventure
45 The Mechanic
46 Biutiful
47 Animal Kingdom
48 I Come With The Rain
49 Sanctum
50 Hereafter
51 Paul
52 The Dilemma
53 Yogi Bear

DVD & BLU-RAY REVIEWS

54 DVD round-up, including Buried and Despicable Me

ART

FEATURES

58 No country for small men
70 Mobile homes
84 Out on a limb
106 Chained to the world

STYLE

FEATURES

124 Made men
138 Tears for fears
146 V for vendetta
162 The ghost of you



PAGE 18

PAGE 36



interview with

Donald Sutherland

star of *The Mechanic*
words by Tom Seymour



PAGE 58

PAGE 146



STYLE



FAN THE FIRE

mail@fanthefiremagazine.com

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Sam Bathe

MUSIC EDITOR

Alex Brammer

FILM EDITOR

Martin Roberts

FEATURES WRITERS

Nick Deigman

Nathan May

STAFF WRITERS

Lucia Binding, Rob Henneberry, Dan Hopchet, Mansoor Iqbal, Eva-Alexandra Liu, Tom Moorer, Natasha Peach, Andrew Simpson, Laura Vevers, Sam Walker-Smart, Tom Seymour, James Wright

SUB-EDITOR

Chris Dempsey

COLOUR MANAGEMENT

Robin Sloan

ART DIRECTOR

Sam Bathe

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Lateef Joseph-Maynard

ADVERTISING

For further details and pricing, contact us on

advertising@fanthefiremagazine.com

OPERATIONS ASSISTANTS

Michael Evans, Damir Hurtic

CONTRIBUTORS

MC Bess, Alexandra Demenkova, Peter Garfield, Justin Hollar, Isa Jacob, Matt King, Linus Morales, Magnus Österhult, Florian Tremp, My Rinsted, Lena Svanold

COVER BY

PHOTOGRAPHY **LINUS MORALES** COLOUR MANAGEMENT **ROBIN SLOAN**

ONLINE: FANTHEFIREMAGAZINE.COM

BACK ISSUES: FANTHEFIREMAGAZINE.COM/BACKISSUES

FAN THE FIRE MAGAZINE IS PUBLISHED MONTHLY ONLINE, ON IPHONE AND ON IPAD USING THE FAN THE FIRE PUBLISHING PLATFORM

FOR LICENSING ENQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT [HELLO@FANTHEFIREPLATFORM.COM](mailto:hello@fanthefireplatform.com)

CONTENT MAY NOT BE REPRODUCED IN WHOLE OR IN PART WITHOUT WRITTEN PERMISSION FROM FAN THE FIRE MAGAZINE.

© FAN THE FIRE MEDIA LTD 2011

TWEET US



[TWITTER.COM/FANTHEFIRE](https://twitter.com/FANTHEFIRE)





F R I D A Y
N I G H T
F I S T
F I G H T





2 8 / 0 1 / 1 1
@ C A T C H ,
L O N D O N





P H O T O S
BY MATT KING
(MATT-KING.
BLOGSPOT.COM)





N E X T :
F R I D A Y
2 5 t h
M A R C H





**WE BARBARIANS'
NEW TRACKS**



**THE BLACKBERRY
BOLD 9780**



**SXSW
ANTICIPATION**



**HAPPYTHANKYOU-
MOREPLEASE**



**CHINESE
NEW YEAR**



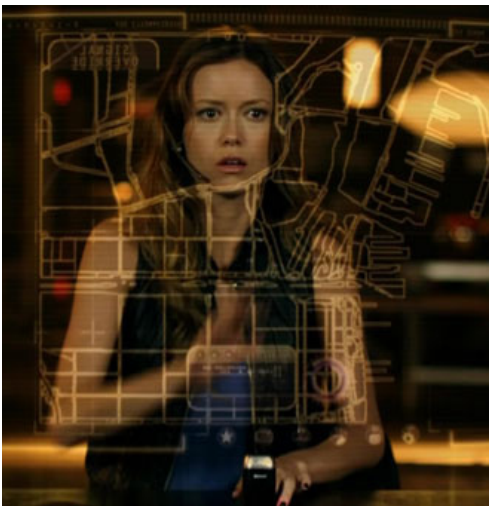
**SUPER BOWL HALF-TIME
MOVIE TRAILERS**



**UNDERCOVER
LONDON'S UMBRELLAS**



**KAWS
LIGHT BULBS**



**US MID-SEASON
TV REPLACEMENTS**



**CHARLIE
BROOKER**

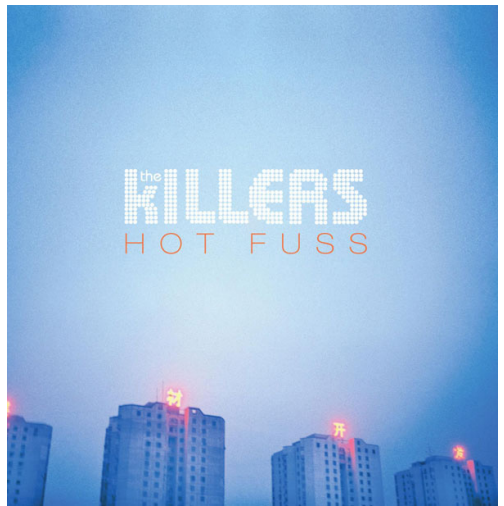


**THE WAIT
UNTIL SXSW**



**THE RETURN OF
LIAM GALLAGHER**

**HA-
TE**



**THAT THE KILLERS WILL
NEVER MATCH HOT FUSS**



**MISSING SUNDANCE
FILM FESTIVAL 2011**



**POINTLESS REVIEW
EMBARGOES**



**UPS' HEAVY
HANDLING**



MUSIC



ROCK N' ROLL AIN'T
NO NOISE POLLUTION



KURRAN AND THE
WOLFNOTES
INTERVIEW



THE STROKES



ALBUM REVIEWS

Wolfing around.

Kurran And The Wolfnotes.

WORDS SAM WALKER-SMART

Scenes and subcultures act as both breeders and destroyers of creativity. For every truly original act progressing popular music, there's a hundred cheap imitations, and those unfortunately caught in the crossfire are quickly tarnished with the same brush. Shaking off their 'nu-folk' tag with a dogged enthusiasm and no bulls**t intelligence, Kurran and his band of musical minstrels plan to be much more than a flash in the pan. It's simply about the music. Well, when they're not chilling with a smoke and carefully examining fan mail.

FAN THE FIRE: 2010 proved to be an exciting year for the band, what were your main highlights?

KURRAN KARBAL: The Lightspeed Champion tour. Although we did it with five of us in my tiny Renault Clio (European and UK dates) and we couldn't stand up straight on stage most nights. The Lightspeed dudes, being the f**king legends that

they are, carried our gear around in their van with them, just so we could even do the tour. Most of those shows were the best gigs we've ever had.

FTE: The 'buzz band' tag and constant lazy comparisons when you started must have grown tiresome. Did it ever get a bit much or did it just make you more eager to prove your worth?

KK: Initially it was all very exciting, but it did start to wear on me that we'd been so quickly flung into a genre we didn't even know existed. And I couldn't, and still can't, see this folk revival thing lasting too long. I think because we are all so bombarded with such synthetic music nowadays, the more organic aspects of 'nu-folk', or whatever the f**k its called now, were the elements that bred its quick and snappy success. But it's just a sensation, like Justin Bieber. I now take it as a sign that we're on the right track because we have some of those very organic elements but we're living in the present.

FTE: How's the debut album going?

KK: Its moved on miles since our previous releases. We were never really happy with any of them but could never afford to re-record. In turn, we've taken a very different approach to recording this record. It's all live and none of it is to a click track (or metronome thing). And it's not 'retro' for f**k's sake. It's going to be honest, or at least as honest as any record can be. Our previous recordings really lacked that but now we're fully converted to the old school methods of recording. And the album sounds all the better for it. It's got a sweet 'surfy-ness' to it and I think in terms of the actual sounds, it reminds me of Jeff Buckley more than anything else. That's not to say I'm close to any of his vocal wizardry or anything as egotistical as that, I just mean in terms of the sound of the kit, bass, guitars and so on.

FTE: You've mentioned your admiration for bands like Radiohead in the past, groups with strong discographies. Are you feeling the pressure to deliver



an equally accomplished debut or are you just happily trying your best and letting fate decide?

KK: What I admire in Radiohead is the way their sound has evolved through their records. Thom Yorke has done an amazing job in steering the band through parts of the sonic spectrum that had since been reserved for crazy Scandinavian sound artists. As a starting point, I think we've left ourselves a lot of directions to take the music in. That's really more important to me than any kind of Mumford And Sons breakthrough. Obviously we need some success from this record to move onto the next and I'm hoping we're worthy of it. Yes, we did put more of the folk songs on this album give it some contemporary reference. And yes, we hate ourselves for caving in. But I promise you that the soul selling stops there.

FTF: Speaking of recording you worked with famed Smiths/Morrissey producer Stephen Street, did you find that a little surreal?

KK: Yeah a little bit. He's such a lovely guy though and I'm proud to say even though we didn't do the record with him I still very much consider him a friend. He only lives a town down from me. I was there quite a lot this year getting his advice on keeping the band afloat. He even took me snowboarding

last year... Now I am showing off, but wouldn't you? Snowboarding all day then hot tubbing it with of a view of Mont Blanc, talking records with one of the most important British producers to date. And Stephen is as good a skier as he is a producer. I'd like to think I'm a very tidy snowboarder but I was eating street dust down those mountains all week.

FTF: Your music has a strong personal and intimate quality. Do you adhere to the philosophy that lasting and timeless music is played from the heart and from ones own experiences?

KK: I'm more a believer that no song can ever be honest. I'm an existentialist to my core, which doesn't exist in me [laughs]. Sorry I'll strongly resist the urge to deconstruct everything we think a song can mean. But on that tangent, the stories (or memories recounted to my fellow existentialists) you tell your mates day to day or month to month, some are forgotten after a week some after a year. And the really peculiar ones might have an almost rehearsed narrative to showcase them, but that's just a bastardisation of what really happened. Given a nice beginning, middle and punch line, and told from a perspective that gives it purpose, can cast the storyteller in some kind of amiable glow. I have no interest in writing songs that reek of

the same dishonesty. These stories or memories don't make us who we are. It's the darker memories that do that. The ones that are still vivid because you haven't shared them with the world, you haven't bastardised them. So I write about those ones because it's my belief that they are the most honest ones a person can recount. Having said that, the lyrics are a mock with double meanings, and I hide behind that a bit. But if I told you that my brother's suicide, or sexual abuse were the real undercurrents of some of the tracks, I think, you'd thank me that the lyrics weren't too honest.

FTF: How would you describe your relationship with the fans?

KK: I know that I'm s**t at all that and I feel terrible for it. Face to face I love talking to anyone who has an interest in the band. But I can't keep up with MySpace and Facebook. I'm going to get a P.O. box and people can write me letters. Have you noticed in Sherlock Holmes' stories he always spends a length of time examining the paper and seal before even reading it. Typed word is too way too elusive for me. *Kurran And The Wolfnotes' debut album will be released later this year* ♣



Rock n' Roll ain't no noise pollution: A call to arms

WORDS SAM WALKER-SMART



Rock is dead, or so the papers say. It has emerged that the guitar-led music we all love is dying on the vine; single sales are at fifty year low, and the charts, a hallowed realm barely touched by rebellious tunes. *X-Factor* and *Glee* are kings now, the grave is dug and soon, all but the titans – the Jovis, the Stones – and the other great wrinkled of this world, will be thrown in and buried, remembered as a footnote in popular music culture. Least that's this month's hot topic

The electronica and pop genres are now the true innovators of today's music, cry the experts; "it's time to move on", "rock is as stale as week-old bread", "a lost cause". While the dedicated remind the fallen of the success of festivals such as Reading and Download, annually providing thousands with a slice of riff-filled mayhem and chantable choruses, they both have points, of course, and lazy journalistic cries of 'death' aside, it's a debate worth exploring.

Turning to the academic community for clarity Dr. Louis Jewson talks to **FAN THE FIRE**; "Rock is by no means dead in this day and age. Since inception rock has, for a great many, stood as the voice of discontent and antiestablishment rebellion for the disenfranchised and those that felt downtrodden. People like that will always exist". A man with such an impressive bookshelf wouldn't lie and he does highlight what's really wrong with those dinging the death toll of good 'ol rock n' roll; they're looking at things from a purely financial standpoint.

Money is naturally in the industry's top interests when backing those unknown talents, but it's not what creates movements, inspires fandom, or shakes things up to such

a degree that an opening for new cultures, groups and thus revenues are created. Yet a band needs a label in order to truly get noticed, and with multi-album contracts now a rarity it's often a one shot deal.

Even those holding the purse strings have lost the faith. Sad, considering so many iconic acts didn't really hit a chord with a mass audience until their second, third or even fourth album. Elbow; case and point. The once forward-thinking model of using the internet as a form of self-advertisement and publishing has also lost much of its appeal. While still effective, it's no longer the front-page news it once was, simply put, everyone and their dog is using the net to grab the masses' attention. As for physical releases, more time and effort is going into looking back rather than forward. Nostalgia being a marketable emotion has meant that every year brings an onslaught of re-issues and 'deluxe editions', prying notes from the superfan's hands. Some of these have been truly impressive, while others, such as last year's six-disc *Station To Station* Bowie release, reek of absurdity and a sad eagerness to please. Looking back, it seems to have become the thorn in

rock's side, both style- and business-wise as there is just not enough investment in the here and now.

November last year saw thousands take to the streets to protest the controversial rise in tuition fees. Similar levels of violence, destruction and general unrest had not been seen

on the streets of London since the infamous poll tax rise of 1990. People were pissed.

A mere six months into office and the coalition had already managed to cause widespread rioting, protests and sinking popularity. With the art world

taking chops left, right and centre, and VAT increased to help ease country debt, we're in a state of unrest. It's all very punk really, the pot could easily boil over, and so it should, with the Iraq war failing to cause a substantial cultural shift in music, now is the time for the pieces to crumble and for the mould to be re-built. I call all ye rockers to arms, racket must be made and all shall pay attention. It's time for something fresh to emerge from the basements and back bedrooms of the globe, something with a score to settle.

It has been twenty years since grunge, that last truly arresting musical subculture. Guitar-based music has sucked the reservoir of retro dry, displaying inspirations as diverse as the Talking Heads and Metallica. It was fun, often great, but it wasn't original, not in the truest sense. Rock isn't dead; it's just not as exciting as it used to be. The outrage and social malice is missing. Metal continues, strong as ever, (you can't kill the metal), but then again, metal has rarely bothered the charts, happy to merely shake the bones of those interested. Rock, in its truest flashy, show-stopping form, has been replaced by floppy fringes and mid-tempo bland tunes more likely to slit a wrist or start off a wedding, than to cause havoc. Rock needs a jump-start, a Red Bull blood transfusion, and a kick up the arse. It's up to us, the youth, to do this. Back to the good doctor, "the importance of rebellion in society lies primarily in its ability to instigate change. Rebellion stems from the need for rights and personal freedoms for the otherwise voiceless masses. Merely the threat of that kind of opposition can be enough to secure those things." It's an idealistic view that a bands going to come along and instantly 'change the world' but a host of like minded people can at least rattle the order of things. You can't kill a genre, you can't kill a mood, rock's still here, but its true spirit lays dormant waiting for someone to bring it kicking and screaming back into people's lives. As the King himself once said; "Rock and roll music, if you like it, if you feel it, you can't help but move to it." ♣

"REBELLION STEMS FROM THE NEED FOR RIGHTS AND PERSONAL FREEDOMS FOR THE OTHERWISE VOICELESS MASSES."

Back. At. Last. The Strokes return.

WORDS TOM MOORER



Ten years is a long time in the music industry, and its testament to the undeniable sticking power of The Strokes that they haven't quite collapsed under the weight of expectation, all since *Is This It* graced the airwaves back in 2001.

Regularly heralded as one of their generation's defining groups, the band's fourth release sees the group at an intriguing set of crossroads. With established side projects for both Julian Cassablancas and Albert Hammond Jr. (as well as Fab Moretti's own Little Joy), seeing whether the band still have the prowess and togetherness to carve out another memorable album is tantalising for all.

With *Room On Fire* and *First Impressions Of Earth* both receiving mixed critical and commercial success,

the upcoming *Angles* should prove a barometer for how The Strokes have seemingly progressed since their breakthrough debut, ten years ago.

The full tracklisting has now been confirmed, including *Undercover Of Darkness*, a free single out now, *Taken For A Fool*, *Life Is Simple In The Moonlight*, *Machu Picchu*, *Radio Minor Madness* and *Call Me Back*. In a recent *Rolling Stone* interview, Albert Hammond Jr. confirmed the album title stating: "It's what the record sounds like... It comes from five different people." The group have also openly spoken of the difficulties in picking the final ten tracks for the LP, with numerous disagreements on whether certain songs were at polished-enough to make the final cut.

A comprehensive world tour is ex-

pected, following the March 22 release of *Angles*, with the band also already confirmed to headline Coachella, The New Orleans Jazz Festival, and Spain's Benicassim Festival. They are heavily tipped too to play a clutch of European festivals, culminating with a widely-rumoured appearance at Glastonbury, which would certainly go down a treat.

Ultimately, all signs point to a massive year for The Strokes. *Angles* could well prove to be the catalyst the band needs after two relatively unexceptional albums, and extensive touring could recapture their once customary on-stage swagger. That said, regardless of how the year pans out, The Strokes are still one of the flag-bearers of the decade. And music will be all the better, with the five-piece firing all cylinders once more.





MEN TALK ABOUT BODY

RELEASED OUT NOW

Off-shoots of the much-loved, and much-missed, Le Tigre, the JD Samson-led Brooklyn collective, MEN, go serious with *Talk About Body*, or at least step things up as what started out as a remix project finds new wings.

You could be forgiven for pre-conceiving MEN's output to be superficial, art-pop (the cover art certainly doesn't help), but there's something intriguing about debut *Talk About Body* that suggest they might just be around for longer than 60 seconds.

Though it needs a little more variation, and strangely, perhaps more innovation, MEN infuse such an exuberance, energy and unrelenting beat into their debut, it's sure to make a splash. The oft-throwaway vocals won't make much of an impact, but playing guitar hooks, synth and Bloc Party-esque drums off against each other, fans of We Have Band and new wave electro will find a lot to like, as MEN certainly fill the gap left by Samson's past project.

★★★★☆



LYKKE LI WOUNDED RHYMES

RELEASED FEBRUARY 28

Three years on from breakthrough debut album *Youth Novels*, there's still no-one that really sounds like Lykke Li. After many have tried and failed to take inspiration and borrow her essence, Li's experimental indie electro-pop still stands out from a period of music where really nothing seemed to be going against the timid, thoroughfare grain.

Holing up in Echo Park, LA, to write follow-up, *Wounded Rhymes*, there's still every sign of the darker tone that made *Youth Novels* so intriguing. Suffering a broken heart in her time off, much of the lyrics verbalise an anger and despondence, *Unrequited Love* being the prime example, while single *Get Some* again boasts her much-favoured tribal drums. *Wounded Rhymes* is an album with a little more bite; at times it should be faster, but then who are we to question an artist who is quickly proving herself to be a mainstay far beyond her indie callings.

★★★★☆



JAMES BLAKE JAMES BLAKE

RELEASED OUT NOW

Hype can be a useful ally or a prominent foe for a musician. Case in point, James Blake. The precociously talented Londoner has seen no end to the mass of hype that has followed the release of his eagerly anticipated debut album, the primary question being, can he adapt the array of genres he's used in previous EP's to create a compelling listen within one product?

And that's this album's primary downfall, the lack of any real direction or theme. In cultivating such a cross-section of genres, his debut LP at times seems to blend into one, somewhat flat piece, failing to continually draw you in. That's not to say *James Blake* doesn't have its highlights, *Lindesfarne II* has truly sweeping, gorgeous melodies, and second single *The Wilhelm Scream* builds on dense layers of sound. While the production on the whole is superb, and Blake a future star in the making, his first full release fails to really hit the heights of what is undoubtedly capable of.

★★★★☆



BEADY EYE DIFFERENT GEAR, STILL SPEEDING

RELEASED FEBRUARY 28

When Oasis split up in 2009, it might have been the last we heard of Liam Gallagher. No such luck. Quickly reforming with his ex-Oasis bandmates, sans brother Noel, Beady Eye were born, and now just over a year since their conception, we sit on the eve of debut album, *Different Gear, Still Speeding*.

You might be sensing animosity, and to be honest, I wanted to hate Beady Eye's 'hello world' LP. To our surprise, however, it's actually not half bad.

If you can get past Gallagher's drawling, arrogant vocals, they're backed by some of the best melodies and hooks Liam and co. have produced since Oasis high flyers (*What's The Story*) *Morning Glory* and *Definitely Maybe*. *Bring The Light* is the biggest highlight, upbeat and easy to get on board with, and though there are undoubtedly a handful of fillers en route to closer, *The Morning Son*, keep an open mind and you just might like *Different Gear, Still Speeding*. Who Knew?

★★★★☆



FILM



PREVIEWS



DONALD
SUTHERLAND
INTERVIEW



PETER MULLAN
INTERVIEW



REVIEWS



DVD & BLU-RAY
REVIEWS

I AM NUMBER FOUR

RELEASED FEBRUARY 18 (USA) FEBRUARY 23 (UK)

Here's an example of studios sniffing out a franchise before it even is one. James Frey and Toby Hughes' novel *I Am Number Four*, the first in a proposed six-novel series, is only just out in print, and yet this Michael Bay- and Steven Spielberg-produced adaptation is already primed for release.

The novel, and the film, follows protagonist John Smith (Alex Pettyfer), a member of an alien race fleeing from his home planet, Lorien, pursued by the Mogadorians. The twist is that there are eight Lorien refugees on the run, all teenagers, who are protected by a charm that means they can only be killed in numerical order. John is number four. A bit contrived, perhaps (I haven't read the book), but it certainly creates a sense of urgency, particularly as, at the outset of the story, Number Three has just been killed.

This adaptation is directed by D.J. Caruso (*Disturbia*, *Eagle Eye*) and features supporting turns from Timothy Olyphant (as John's guardian; a role that Sharlto Copley was originally attached to) and Kevin Durand. The setup is one we've heard in variations before – the story of an alien fleeing to Earth is not dissimilar to the most widely known Superman origin, for example – but hopefully the team behind this can add some flavour to the mix. Our screens are saturated with sequels and franchises at the moment, and there is a distinct possibility that this film is being released too early; after all, the books have hardly had chance to settle in. If it does become a franchise, at least it will benefit from the end of *Harry Potter* in the summer, but will still have *Twilight* to contend with.





SOURCE CODE

RELEASED APRIL 1

Duncan Jones' *Moon* came out of nowhere – who even knew David Bowie's son was a director? – and surprised a lot of people by being rather good. So given that he went from being an unknown quantity to a critically acclaimed filmmaker in space of year, 2009 was pretty good for Bowie Jr.

So now onto *Source Code*, which will certainly not come with the same surprise factor, given that it's already being significantly hyped. And why not? After casting Sam Rockwell in *Moon*, Jones has found himself another top-quality leading man in Jake Gyllenhaal. He's also managed to get a rather attractive (ahem) supporting cast on board, including Vera Farmiga and Michelle Monaghan.

Gyllenhaal plays Colter, a decorated soldier who wakes up in the body of an unknown man and realises, somehow, that he is part of a secret government experiment known as 'source code' which allows him to take over another body that is in the last eight minutes of its life. Reliving events over and over again, Colter must gather clues to solve a mystery in what sounds like a cross between a high-tempo thriller and *Groundhog Day*. The story sounds a little contrived, true, but it's also interesting and with all of this talent on board, *Source Code* is definitely something to look forward to.





THE EAGLE

RELEASED FEBRUARY 11 (USA) MARCH 25 (UK)

Kevin Macdonald's film is the second in as many years – after Neil Marshall's *Centurion* – to concern itself with the legend of the Ninth Legion, the Roman legion that, according to legend, disappeared some time around AD117 in Britain. It was this legend that in part inspired Rosemary Sutcliff to write her 1954 novel *The Eagle Of The Ninth*, upon which this project is based.

Channing Tatum (*Dear John*,

Fighting) stars as Marcus Aquila, a centurion who must travel into Scotland to retrieve the legion's lost eagle standard. Accompanied by a British slave (Jamie Bell) he must face the wild tribes (expect plenty of Gaelic) of the north in order to succeed in his quest.

The film is directed by Kevin Macdonald, whose recent output includes *The Last King Of Scotland* and *State Of Play*, so the project is in pretty safe

hands. Aside from the two leads, the supporting cast is also strong, with Donald Sutherland appearing as Marcus' retired uncle and Mark Strong also hanging around as an ex-soldier.

The consensus on *Centurion* was generally that it wasn't brilliant, or to be honest, fairly poor, so here's hoping this second crack at the legend of the Ninth Legion will be a successful one and more entertaining one.



BRIDESMAIDS

RELEASED MAY 13 (USA) JUNE 24 (UK)

Bridesmaids is one of the most hotly-tipped comedies in the coming months, produced as it is by Judd Apatow's Apatow Productions and featuring a smattering of comic talent. Director duties fall to Peter Feig, whose output has primarily been TV-based up to now, but includes a fair few episodes of the American version of *The Office*, as well as guest slots behind the camera on *Arrested Develop-*

ment to Mad Men. In other words, he has experience with comedy.

The plot is based around a very simple set up: two bridesmaids fall into conflict when they both try to plan their friend's wedding in very different ways. The film is co-written by, and stars, the ever-likable Kristen Wiig, who has been prolific over the past few years and involved in films such as *Whip It!* and the vastly under-

rated and wonderful *Adventureland*.

Her presence is important for the project but she is backed up by a heap talent; from Rose Byrne and Jon Hamm to Matt Lucas and Chris O'Dowd. Expect plenty of 'crazy' characters and irreverent humour from this one. Fingers crossed that it will actually be funny and that its cast will be on top form, not allowing the film to collapse under its fairly weak premise.







BATTLE: LOS ANGELES

RELEASED MARCH 11

This promising looking science-fiction actioner from Jonathan Liebesman (*The Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Beginning*, *The Killing Room*) is set to arrive in March, and will hopefully live up to its exciting teasers/trailers.

Starring Aaron Eckhart (currently on a decent run of form, after *The Dark Knight* and *Rabbit Hole*) as Marine Staff Sergeant Michael Nantz who,

along with his marines, must make a last stand in Los Angeles against an invasion by unknown, alien forces. Eckhart's lead is supported by the likes of Michelle Rodriguez (whose last sci-fi extravaganza was *Avatar*), Bridget Moynahan and R&B star Ne-Yo.

The film is shot in a hand-held, ultra-realistic style and looks to be suitably filled with gunfights and

explosions, as well as some impressive special effects. Hopefully *Battle: Los Angeles* won't get bogged down by its \$100m budget and forget to tell a decent story or include interesting characters. Liebesman may not have the most impressive back catalogue to draw from, but this could certainly propel him into the limelight if it fires on all cylinders.



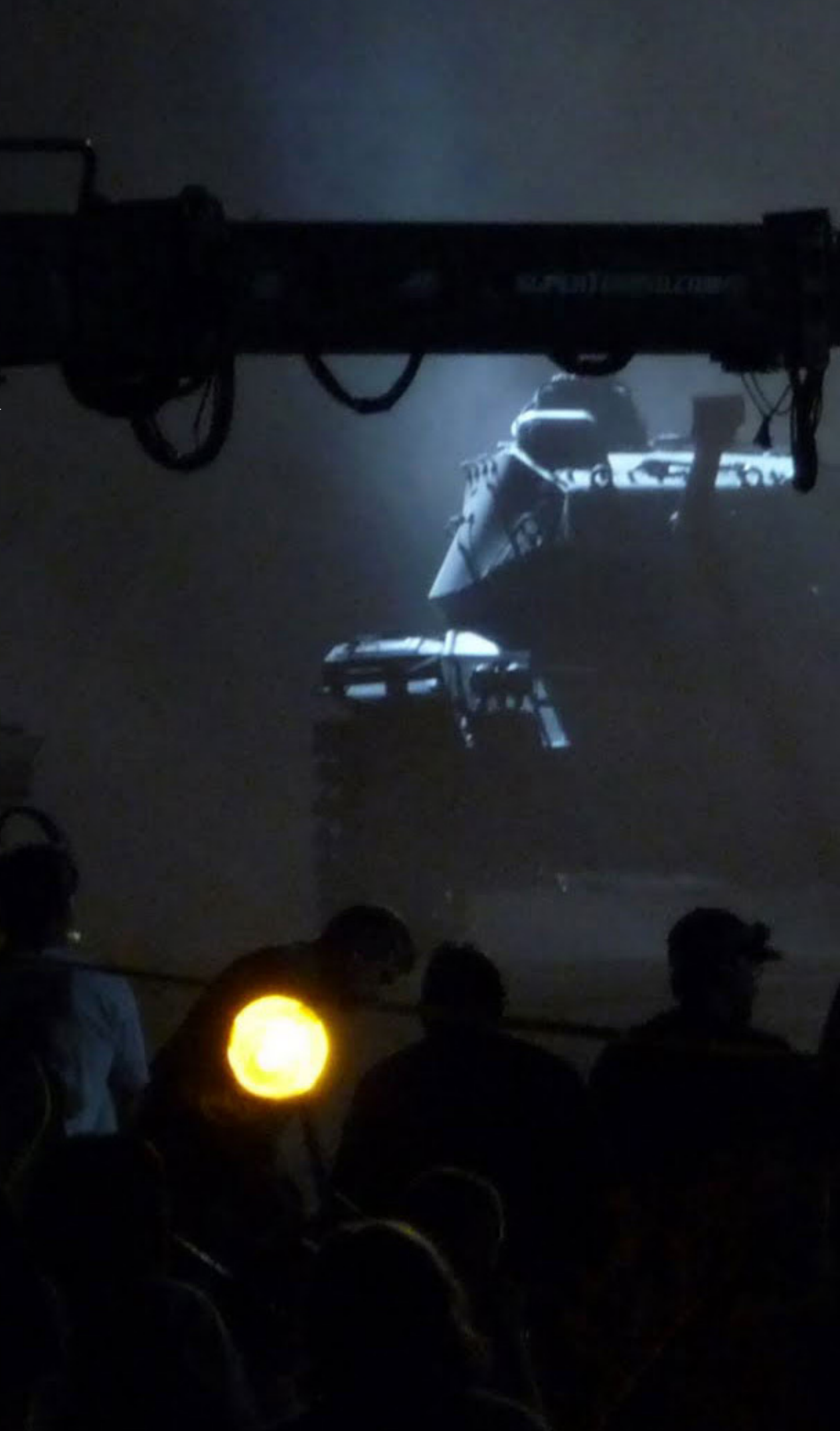
SUPER 8

RELEASED JUNE 10 (USA)
AUGUST 19 (UK)

J.J. 'Lost' Abrams returns to cinema this year following his acclaimed and financially successful reboot of the *Star Trek* franchise with *Super 8*, a super secret project tantalisingly produced by Steven Spielberg. Indeed, Abrams has stated that it will be an homage to Spielberg's sci-fi films from the 70s and 80s.

The by-now widely seen teaser – the release of which now seems remarkably long ago – simply showed an American train being derailed and an unknown entity escaping from one of the carriages, mysteriously labelled 'US Air Force'. And that's it. Abrams still hasn't released any concrete plot details, but a full trailer is due to arrive in the coming months and will surely be very exciting.

Abrams has cast Elle Fanning (younger sister of Dakota) as his lead and has drafted in top talent such as Michael Giacchino to compose the original score. Giacchino has recently worked on films such as *Up* and *Ratatouille* for Pixar, as well as with Abrams on *Star Trek*. There's every reason to be excited about *Super 8* as Abrams (who also wrote the screenplay) is clearly passionate about the project.





interview with

Donald Sutherland

star of *The Mechanic*

words by Tom Seymour

Donald Sutherland sits at ease in a darkened hotel room deep in Soho. Bathed in white light, wearing a pink tie and Croc shoes, and with a chiseled cardboard cut-out of Jason Statham positioned just behind, he still, somehow, commands the room. Publicists buzz with anxiety, journalists shuffle self-consciously, but here Sutherland is completely and perfectly at home; the ultimate pro, the born performer.

Sutherland is in town to promote *The Mechanic*, the new ultra-glossy, ultra-violent 'Stath' vehicle in which he has a small yet significant role. "How are you?" we asked in a timid attempt to build rapport. He takes his time to respond. "I'm 75. Never ask anybody how they are at 75." Nervous laughter all round.

Sutherland's voice purrs. He looks, a little, like a humanised lion, with his long, stately face and shock of grey hair. It's a face and a voice that has starred in over 150 movies, including *The Dirty Dozen*, *M.A.S.H.* and *Don't Look Now*. And yet Sutherland is still going strong, appearing in six movies this year. What keeps him going? Why, as a 75 year-old millionaire, does he carry on acting?

"It's a drug, acting. It keeps you young for a very short period of time because when you walk off the set you're still yourself. It's the pursuit of truth, I think. It's really a boring thing to say but it's true. I have a hero – Michaelangelo – and when he started a sculpture it would start fat but it would become wire thin. He cut it down to the essence of the character. So you try and look for that."

Before interviewing Sutherland, we had heard stories. He's known as the 'Sutherland Express' – however much you try and guide the interview, he'll pick you up and take you wherever he wants to go. He's been in the business and played the game for over 50 years, and has picked up a few stories on the way. When asked what he thought truth was in acting, this is what we got:

"Brecht wrote a poem to the factory workers of Denmark when he was

"I'm 75. Never ask anybody how they are at 75."

escaping the Nazis in Germany and heading to Hollywood. And he wrote this poem to the guys in the theater. It's a long poem but at the centre of it is that they must compare and observe, compare and observe, and to distill it down until what you give to the audience is like what Alexander Pope said: 'True Wit is Nature to advantage dress'd. What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd.'

"You know Sam Goldwyn years ago addressed the screen writers guild and he said that he had discovered the secret of acting. He said the secret of acting is honesty, and once you learn to fake that, you're in. But you can't fake it, it has to be honest."

This is man who has received direction from Fellini, Roeg and Altman, and acted opposite Brando, but the film he is here to promote doesn't seem to fit in with his oeuvre. Maybe he's too good at the press trail, but he seems genuinely excited by *The Mechanic*, and the force that is Statham.

"To see a young actor like Jason Statham come from what he was in *The Italian Job*. He was a performer in *The Italian Job*, and he was good. He held himself well. In this film, and in the scenes with me, he was stoic and implacable. And golly the stuff he did at the end, it was exquisite. His love, his grief, his love, his loss. He was able to bring that out and I was thrilled. It's

an action film, it's a violent film, but more than that, Simon West has been able to make a film about the relationship between fathers and sons, which is important to him and it's important to me. And those two boys did a wonderful job."

He has, to be honest, got a point. *The Mechanic* is burger and chips after a few pints cinema, but even a good burger and chips has its own distinct charm. Something suggests *The Mechanic* won't be an experience Sutherland will remember for the rest of his days. But this is a man of the movies, through and through. What, **FAN THE FIRE** wonders, is it that he loves so much about movies?

"A good movie takes you to another world. It lifts your psyche and your intelligence and allows you to participate in a world that you would never have been invited in. For two hours time stops. And with any luck, it informs you. *La Strada*, or *Paths Of Glory* – those two films sit in my heart. *All Quiet On The Western Front* sits in my heart. *Klute*, even still my own film, sits in my heart and speaks to me."

And so he raises to shake hands, before passing his hand through his grey mane, and shooting a glance at the stoic, implacable cardboard cut out of Jason Statham. Donald Sutherland is something of a living legend. *The Mechanic* is out now



interview with

Peter Mullan

writer/director of *Neds*

words by James Wright

A revered actor, celebrated director and all-round Scottish role model. There's a lot of positive labels you could throw at Peter Mullan, but you might not realise that he was also once a member of a knife-carrying Glasgow street gang or that he endured a torrid and abusive upbringing at the hands of his alcoholic father.

But like so many others filmmakers have found, sometimes the best way to exorcise our demons is through the power of cinema. This is precisely what Mullan has done with his latest film, *Neds* (Non-Educated Delinquents), describing it as "a deeply personal, if not autobiographical story.

"The thing was when I was first writing the film, there was huge chunks of my early life that I had no recollection of. So I had to check with a few guys who was my kinda age, like just ordinary people on the street, and I'd ask them 'Look is it just me or is it just my imagination (because I'm a drama queen) or was those really f**king violent times?' And I mean Jesus the responses were scary, some of them would make you ill.

"And that's the thing, everyone has a tale to tell, so when you watch the film, people should realise that it's not just me being all like, 'oh yeah gimme some drama to write about', it's just how it was in those days. Like it wasn't uncommon to get beaten up in the house, by the police, a teacher and especially your peers, but that's how it was and you just got on with it.

"Even those moments in the film which were the more extreme forms of violence shall we say, they're still based

on true stories. I was told this story about this guy from Greenock, which is in Inverclyde, and this guy had strapped two blades to his hand, so of course writing a drama you're thinking this is a great image. But it's also very powerful because suddenly you think 'Holy Christ', these knives are an extension of this guy, so one becomes the other, and when you hear moments like that you just have to include it in some capacity.

"I'd also read this story about these two wee lads who battered the s**t out of a guy and left him on the floor in a state of semi-consciousness. Then they came back an hour later with a concrete slab, and dropped it on his head. Now that was about 20 years ago, but you just think why did they go back? They'd proved their point, like 'don't mess with us or don't come into this area', but why did they go back and kill this fella'? So I really tried to make the film as true to how life was as possible; in the film there's a real pervasive feel to the violence, even in the more extreme cases, and that's because it really was everywhere.

"Saying that, when I was writing this I didn't want to be all Mr. Middle age, like I'll show you youngsters what it was like back then and admittedly there was a part of me that wanted to, but I knew that as soon as I did that, a) I'd be a total hypocrite, and b) it would have defeated the whole purpose of the film, because it was never meant to be a finger wagging exercise. At the same time, a lot of people think I added in the funny moments in the film on purpose to punctuate it so its

not all f**king depressing all the time, but the truth is that's just me. I mean, I can't stand the sugar on the pill stuff in films and although the film is very serious, I think the whole film can also be seen as a bit of a comedy because it's so out there. Sometimes when your life gets so bad is when your life is also the funniest, so the film, I think, has this high comedy, high tragedy concept which I think really go hand in hand.

"It's interesting because sometimes films will just crowbar in those moments, not just in comedy but drama also, for a cheap effect. It's so much better just to see what happens naturally, and every now and then the best stuff can come from those little improves on the spot.

"I remember when we were shooting, there were these two really big parts in the film which Connor needed to cry and he couldn't do it. So when he couldn't, you've two choices you can make as a director, You can either take him to one side and slap the f**k out of him and say 'you will cry', or you change your approach. So I said OK then lets see what happens when you don't cry and let's try it your way. It was the scene where they're at the dinner table and the dad says to Connor "finish me", like take me out. Now originally, that's when Connor was meant to cry, and instead he sort of just sat there with it just washing over him. It's almost like he'd become such a psychopath by that stage of the film, that even his dad saying kill me, doesn't affect him anymore and that was the brilliance of it. And as the writer I was thinking, I had a totally different scene set up here, but Connor's version was so powerful and you get this whole different twist and all of that came down to him not being able to do the crying. I think that's why I'll always love acting first. I mean the bottom line is that acting does pay better and its miles less pressure, but it's also such great fun, especially when you get the chances to create these incredible moments which sometimes you never envisioned to begin with. Nothing compares with that."

Neds is out now



"In the film, there's a real pervasive feel to the violence."



HAPPYTHANKYOU-MOREPLEASE

DIRECTED BY JOSH RADNOR **STARRING** JOSH RADNOR, MALIN AKERMAN, MICHAEL ALGIERI, ZOE KAZAN, KATE MARA, TONY HALE, PABLO SCHREIBER & FAY WOLF

RELEASED MARCH 4 (USA) TBC (UK)

The cinematic debut from *How I Met Your Mother*'s Josh Radnor, the multi-talented actor writes, directs and stars in *Happythankyoumoreplease*, a film that despite its ridiculously indie title, deserves to be taken seriously, even in the now far-overused *Garden State* vein of filmmaking.

Focal is Sam (Radnor), a struggling writer told he won't be getting any more advances from his publishers. Sam takes in Rasheen (Algieri), a young boy in foster care left by his family on the subway, but backing out of dropping him off at the police

station where Rasheen will be tossed around carers once more, Sam lets the kid stay at his house until he can figure out what to do. Though that's not the only problem on his mind. Somewhat similarly to his character in *How I Met Your Mother*, Radnor's Sam is searching for love, and perhaps equally foolish, when he does find a girl he likes in Mississippi (Mara), he invites her to stay with him for three days, under written 'contract', and with unpredictable consequences.

You'll soon notice love is a theme in *Happythankyoumoreplease*, and the film's tagline 'get yourself loved', couldn't apply any more to Sam's best friend, Annie (Akerman). An Alopecia sufferer, she struggles to free her emotions and let herself fall into someone else's arms. Completing the intertwining three-way is Sam's cousin Mary Catherine (Kazan), whom with boyfriend Charlie (Schreiber), faces a life changing move away from New York at a point in their relationship where they either go all or nothing.

Happythankyoumoreplease is indie rom-com fodder, but as *The Kids*

Are All Right proved last year, and (500) *Days Of Summer* before that, if you follow the tropes with enthusiasm and as much originality as one can muster, if the performances are strong, the results really pay off.

Perfectly paced, not racing to the conclusion but never feeling long, you're given a chance to get to know the characters which allows for a very satisfying conclusion to the intertwining stories. Despite a poor song choice for the closing sequence (at a gig for aspiring performer Mississippi), sounding like a knock-off Disney sing-a-long rather than a cabaret classic, *Happythankyoumoreplease* is charming and sweet, with enough edge to give the narrative a backbone. It's not sickly and plays the heartfelt moments with a perfect tone.

Radnor should be more than pleased with his film debut, and this is how rom-coms should be made, not like the hapless Hollywood offerings. *Happythankyoumoreplease* feels real despite the clichéd elements; natural and honest until the closing credits.

★★★★★



INSIDE JOB

DIRECTED BY CHARLES FERGUSON STARRING MATT DAMON (NARRATOR), WILLIAM ACKMAN, DANIEL ALPERT, JONATHAN ALPERT & SIGRIDUR BENEDIKTSDOTTIR

RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) FEBRUARY 18 (UK)

History is about to repeat itself. At least that is the message of Charles Ferguson's *Inside Job*, the first major documentary to examine the root causes of 2008's global financial meltdown, a crisis that cost \$20trillion, millions of jobs and the loss of many people's homes. Finally arriving in the UK, the film has been making a splash since its premiere at Cannes last year, and has just received an Oscar nomination for Best Documentary.

A film about a crisis in the banking sector doesn't start from the strongest of positions, for the simple reason that something as abstract as the movement of capital isn't very visually exciting. What's more, while documentaries can offer insight into events by talking directly to those involved, the lurid wealth of bankers that makes for such good on screen entertainment hardly offers a deeper explanation of why the system went wrong. That somebody tried to make a film about the crisis was perhaps inevitable, but *Inside Job* could have very easily been a dull, if worthy, film.

It's a pleasant surprise then that *Inside Job* manages to be both stylish and serious. Taking in the use of drugs, prostitutes and fraudulent expense accounts, it manages to explore the sexier aspects of the financial world, while also recognising that this is just a symptom of how reckless bankers felt they could be with other people's

money, an example of the characters a corrupt system attracts rather than the cause of the corruption itself. The film saves its real ire for those it identifies as the true villains; the money men at the heart of politics.

Beginning with Iceland's economic collapse, *Inside Job's* running theme is how the relationship between the banking sector and politicians resulted in regulation that wasn't really regulation at all. Ferguson's narrator Matt Damon contrasts our own times with earlier, regulated stability, and in exploring the relaxation of controls under Ronald Reagan reveals a shadowy cabal of ex-bankers at the heart of the American government. Wielding huge influence as advisers, regulators and lobbyists, they consistently pushed for fewer checks on financial markets, often serving on the boards of the very companies that they later bail out.

Inside Job structures itself almost like a globe-trotting thriller, making links between financial institutions and national governments the world over, ratcheting up tension as it describes the long walk to disaster, and bringing all the strands back together again in the film's major set piece. In Hollywood tradition, the heroes of the story are the few good men and women who attempt to warn their superiors about the impending danger, only to be silenced. All the while vertiginous overhead shots of New York, London and elsewhere provide a nice visual metaphor for the action, creating a feeling of awe at the scale of human wealth while also offering the sense of an imminent tumble to earth.

Inside Job's most impressive feat is that Ferguson was able to get into the room with so many of his targets. Those that saw the crisis coming are present and correct, but Ferguson also

sits down with many of the advisers, board members, regulators and lobbyists at whom he points the finger. Their flagrant conflicts of interest are so shocking that it beggars belief that they would speak about them on camera, and in a world where confidence is everything, they should probably know better. One simply asks for the camera to be turned off when the questions become too tough, while Glenn Hubbard, George Bush's Chief Economic Advisor, defiantly barks; "You have three more minutes. Give it your best shot!" Others merely shrug off the charges, like the government advisor who says he has no regrets about serving on the board of AIG.

The unreflective and unrepentant nature of those responsible for the crisis is not Ferguson's most shocking revelation, though. As well as refuting culpability, the film's final act shows many of its villains being sworn into what one interviewee describes as President Obama's 'Wall Street Government', and teaching the next generation of economists to worship de-regulation at major universities, while continuing to be rewarded for their services to corporate interests. It's the film's final twist, leaving room for a sequel.

Inside Job occasionally loses the thread of its argument, and a final Michael Moore-esque rallying cry is a little unnecessary in the light of a powerful expose that says plenty on its own. But this is some achievement, managing to be more entertaining than *Wall Street 2* while saying infinitely more about the iniquities of those that claim to work for us. The fact that they remain well placed to do so again is perhaps one of the scarier film endings we will see this year.

★★★★★



BARNEY'S VERSION

DIRECTED BY RICHARD J. LEWIS **STARRING** PAUL GIAMATTI, ROSAMUND PIKE, MINNIE DRIVER, RACHELLE LEFÈVRE, SCOTT SPEEDMAN & DUSTIN HOFFMAN

RELEASED OUT NOW

Barney Panofsky (Giamatti) has a son that refuses to speak to him, a daughter that dutifully suffers his company, three ex-wives (one of whom he is still desperately and hopelessly in love with) who want him dead, a TV company that is going down the pan after decades of churning out utter tripe, and a drunken ex-cop who is still trying to pin a thirty year old murder on him; life is not great. But drowning under this cacophony of slurs and mistakes is a pained man who can't quite pin down the actual, tangible points at which he went wrong. Well what we are about to hear, is Barney's version.

Barney begins life – as far as this story is concerned – as the square, Jewish friend of a rag-tag band of American travellers screwing and doping their way around Italy in the 1960s. He marries a “conversation piece” hippy that he has seemingly

knocked up, but when she miscarries a mixed race baby he refuses to speak to her, and finds her dead in her apartment a few days later. Barney escapes back to Canada to marry a “nice Jewish girl” (Driver) and work in the film business. But on his wedding night he falls heels-over-head in love with another woman – the woman he will lie beside for eternity – Miriam (Pike).

His marriage to the Jewish princess is a disaster from the off, and when he finally finds her sleeping his heroin-addict best friend Boogie (Speedman), he can barely contain his delight at his impending, financially risk-free, divorce. But he cannot forgive Boogie, and in a drunken fight he accidentally lets off a few rounds from his gun, and Boogie disappears into the lake behind their cottage, never to be seen again. With a hot-headed cop (Addy) on his tale, Barney heads straight to New York to woo Miriam, and finally seems to have found happiness, until he eventually manages to screw that up too.

This adaptation of Mordecai Richler's 1997 novel flitters between bizarre tragic-comedy and straight drama. There are quirky layers to Richler's writing – eg. Barney's company is called 'Totally Unnecessary Productions' – that bring the film into line with the likes of *Sideways*, *American Splendor* (no coincidence who starred in both those films) and *Election*. Most

of the film thrives off this impossibly bizarre and satirical subject matter; there is a flippancy and incorrigibility to the style and pace of the storytelling that matches perfectly with our lovable, pig-headed hero.

This film tries to be a bit more grown up than its 'quirky indie' brethren, but it doesn't quite manage it. The vast timescale means *Barney's Version* needed to be a more patient in its pacing, and unfortunately there are points at which the tragic-comic tone collapses into melodrama with a reliance on clichéd 'standing in an autumnal graveyard while violins weep through the soundtrack' moments that feel totally unnecessary.

Around awards season, it is important to take note of a few other elements of a film that sometimes go unnoticed. The make-up is absolutely wonderful – understated and impeccable, and when Giamatti appears on screen at his actual age he somehow looks abnormally young because we have become so used to seeing him as a natural old man.

The 'performance by an English actress' is also essential at this time of year, and Rosamund Pike has delivered a career best performance which could have garnered her some attention at the BAFTAs (although one doubts it will be enough to make Los Angeles sit up and take note).

★★★★★



NO STRINGS ATTACHED

DIRECTED BY IVAN REITMAN **STARRING** ASHTON KUTCHER, NATALIE PORTMAN, KEVIN KLINE, LAKE BELL, OLIVIA THIRLBY, JAKE M. JOHNSON, GRETA GERWIG & LUDACRIS

RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) FEBRUARY 25 (UK)

Just beating Will Gluck's *Friends With Benefits* to release, and even boasting a tagline of 'friendship has its benefits' on the poster, *No Strings Attached* perhaps crucially hits cinemas first, given the two boast a seemingly identical plot, but while front runners out of the gate are often important, if you haven't got the quality to back it up, it's a somewhat hollow crown.

About two friends (Kutcher and Portman) who make a pact to have

casual sex but never fall in love with each other, somewhat unsurprisingly Adam quickly wants things to get a little more serious as real feelings start to develop. Scared of commitment, however, Emma leaves their relationship in jeopardy, as when everything blows up with the couple on the verge of something that could last, seeing sense seems a mile away, even though it's right in front of their eyes.

Talked of in the media as *Love And Other Drugs*, without the disease, or the drugs, *No Strings Attached* also lacks good performances and an absorbing story, compared with its similarly racy rom-com sibling.

After building up a semi-believable relationship, if formed from only a couple of brief encounters, the plot doesn't ever really go anywhere beyond the simple concept, leaving the narrative feeling remarkably linear. The script and comedy feel lazy and go simply in search of cheap laughs, and even those they can't provide.

The frequently crude dialogue feels out of place and leaves the film pleasing neither rom-com-aholics nor the Apatow-loving crowd, as in-between the cutesy scenes and telegraphed plot points comes a rude and misplaced tone.

Portman is good, and gives as much as feels necessarily for such an unimportant film, instead the talking point should be around Kutcher, whom now at an age of 33, should have matured into a much better actor than his recent films suggest, and this latest performances comes devoid of any real charisma or enthusiasm.

With side characters you couldn't care less about, even Lake Bell's perfectly played over-eager TV producer, *No String Attached* is a dismal start for 2011's casual sex comedies, and even laughing at Kutcher's attempts to pull off a college under-grad at an early concept-setting scene, doesn't warrant the admission price, if coming close.

★☆☆☆☆



A TURTLE'S TALE: SAMMY'S ADVENTURE

DIRECTED BY BEN STASSEN **STARRING** GEMMA ARTERTON,
DOMINIC COOPER, ROBERT SHEEHAN, JOHN HURT,
KAYVAN NOVAK & CHRISTINE BLEAKLEY

RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) MARCH 25 (UK)

About a baby turtle and his journey from a bright-eyed youngster to his 50-year old self in the opening credits, *A Turtle's Tale: Sammy's Adventure* sees the titular character (Cooper) search-

ing for his true love, another hatchling (Arterton) he met on the beach where he first saw life, barely minutes after they climbed out of their eggs.

Travelling across the world, losing and finding friends, spending time with a hippy, beach-dwelling family, and hearing legends of a mystical secret sea passage, *A Turtle's Tale* certainly had potential but fails to ever come off as anything more than a poor man's *Finding Nemo*. It was always going to be tough ask to steer clear of the legendary comparison, even harder to beat it, and unfortunately for director Ben Stassen, *A Turtle's Tale* is thoroughly outdone by the Pixar classic.

As throwaway as Stassen's last effort, *Fly Me To The Moon*, while some of the characters prove entertaining in fits and starts, the story doesn't do anything near enough to keep you

involved for the 88-minute runtime, aimlessly meandering forward without even a whiff of narrative structure.

Young kids might enjoy the bright colours and worldwide 'adventure', but there's little beneath the surface and adults will bore easily. Similarly the vocal acting isn't terrible, though changed for a third time after the American offering and Belgium's original edit, they're certainly not perfect as *A Turtle's Tale* proves adequate if entirely unexceptional on pretty much every level.

With the pointless 3-D, and annoying, even off-putting, objects that fly towards the screen, rent *Nemo* instead, as certainly another spell under Pixar's magical gaze will do a lot more for you than *A Turtle's Tale: Sammy's Adventure* could ever dream of.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★



THE MECHANIC

DIRECTED BY SIMON WEST **STARRING** JASON STATHAM, BEN FOSTER, TONY GOLDWYN, DONALD SUTHERLAND, JEFF CHASE, MINI ANDEN, JAMES LOGAN & EDDIE FERNANDEZ

RELEASED OUT NOW

On the press circuit for the surprisingly entertaining *Crank*, a journalist acting above his station asked Jason Statham about the film's aesthetic. "This ain't *The Godfather*, a'rite," came the Stath's mockney reply. Born the latest king of the B-movie, a crown he wears with pride in *The Mechanic*.

A remake of a film that was rubbish in the first place (Michael Winner's 1972 sloppy, crawling effort), the eponymous 'mechanic' here is Statham's Arthur Bishop, an elite hitman employed by a shadowy corporate company for his unique ability to take out well-protected bad men the world over, without leaving a mess.

The opening sequence deals with an obligatory Columbian drugs baron. Like most of the set-pieces in the film, the scene starts in the middle or near the end. We don't see Statham plan, prepare or set up, we just see the pay-off and escape, in this case drowning the poor sap in a swimming

pool before audaciously wrong-footing enough militia to grace *Commando*.

"You gotta have a certain mentality for this game," Statham/Bishop says more than once. This mentality, we can guess, is an adherence to efficiency, an emotional detachment and a stoic ability to not become compromised by anyone or anything.

Bishop lives alone in a designer house hidden in the New Orleans bayous. Occasionally, he drops into a bar to hook-up, in the most economic way, with an unquestioning call-girl. His jobs are contracted out by two contacts – the old, kindly, wheelchair-bound Harry (Donald Sutherland) with whom he obviously shares a kinship, and the smooth, officious and instantly suspicious Dean (Tony Goldwyn).

But Bishop's adherence to his craft is shaken to its core by his next target. Dean accuses Harry of betrayal and makes it clear that he must be taken out. Bishop, as the man closest to him, is perfectly positioned. Harry is dispatched with a professional efficiency and a painful reluctance, and thus the perfect cliché is revealed: the perfect killer must now handle a conscience.

This conscience comes in the form of Steve (Ben Foster), Harry's layabout disappointment of a son. Steve is everything Bishop is not – impul-

sive, erratic and arrogant – but he's devastated by his father's death. In a gruff show of kindness, Bishop agrees to mentor him, so, together, they can avenge his father's death.

And so an unlikely double-act begins: Statham, with his high-tensile stubble, chest you could dry your clothes on and chin like a battering ram, and Foster, all angular sneers, wiry strength and cracked voice. Steve is a reluctant student, and his involvement on subsequent hits assume an unwanted volatility, a lot of mess, and a great excuse for some seriously violent shoot-em-ups.

If the action didn't work, it would be as forgettable as the film that spawned it. But Simon West's shiny and swift direction, inspired by Tony Scott sensationalism and invigorated by a Louisiana blues score, just about manages to grip.

What more is there to say about this film? It's Ronseal cinema; a safe, straight-up succession of set-pieces sprinkled with some truly brilliant old-school action lines. The best, from a sneering Dean; "I'm going to put so much money on your head that when you look in the mirror, your reflection is going to want to shoot you." This ain't *The Godfather*, it's not even *Crank*, but it runs just smooth enough.

★★★★★



BIUTIFUL

DIRECTED BY ALEJANDRO GONZÁLEZ IÑÁRRITU **STARRING**
JAVIER BARDEM, MARICEL ÁLVAREZ, HANAA BOUCHAIB,
GUILLERMO ESTRELLA & EDUARD FERNÁNDEZ

RELEASED OUT NOW

Shot in an entirely unglamorous Barcelona setting, *Biutiful* is Alejandro González Iñárritu's fourth film; a bleak drama that hinges on a brilliant performance by Javier Bardem.

Returning to Spanish for this effort (though, as in *Babel*, other languages are spoken – part of Iñárritu's ongoing fascination with communication between cultures) Bardem stars as Uxbal, a good-hearted man whose involvement in crime is simply one of the many burdens he has to carry. Bardem is put through a lot in this film; it is an immense credit to him that he doesn't collapse under the weight of his director's story, because boy, things aren't going well for him.

On the one side he must deal with his criminal investments, which are seemingly the only way he can provide for his young family, but also offer up new moral quandaries. Should he, for example, allow his friend's building

site to hire a collection of cut-price Chinese novices – for which he will take a cut – rather than expensive trained staff? Uxbal faces endless questions like this; the film is preoccupied with issues concerning who is taking advantage of who, and what justifications they might have. Then, at home, he must deal with poor living conditions, his two young children (strong turns from Guillermo Estrella and Hanaa Bouchaib) and their estranged, bipolar mother (Maricel Álvarez). As if that wasn't enough, Uxbal is diagnosed with terminal cancer not long after the film begins. Then things start to get really bad.

The film's closing dedication makes clear Iñárritu's intention for *Biutiful*; this is a film about fathers – dedicated to the director's own – and about fatherhood. It is also about death and hardship; about dealing with things. In Bardem's hands (or rather, on his shoulders), the weight of the bleakness never completely overtakes the film. If it had, it would have been a failure. Iñárritu's Barcelona slums are shot well and possess vivid detail – the directorial style is intrusive and personal but never overbearing. Thanks to the stark realism on display, Iñárritu's sporadic moments of magical realism and visual symbolism are

blunt but effective. Though there are a lot of supporting characters, unlike with Iñárritu's previous films there are no cross-cuts and no wild narrative or chronological shifts. Those characters are there because Uxbal is there, and his story is linear.

The performances are uniformly strong, the film is well directed, so is this a triumphant return to form for the director of *Amores Perros* and *21 Grams* after the less successful *Babel*? In part it is, in part it isn't. There is too much in the film – too many balls to juggle – and the layers of misery end up feeling a little too didactic. It's overlong and, while it rarely feels unnecessarily ponderous, the final third is dragged out. The film takes itself extremely seriously and occasionally this leads to a sense of being told by the director how we are supposed to react to events, rather than simply being allowed to watch them.

But *Biutiful* is still a good film. Its strengths for the most part outweigh its flaws, and Bardem makes Uxbal a thoroughly convincing protagonist. It's bleak, certainly, but not despairing, although it is indicative of the film's tone that one final, redemptive act is rendered ambiguously through dirty glass.

★★★★★



ANIMAL KINGDOM

DIRECTED BY DAVID MICHÔD **STARRING** BEN MENDELSON, JOEL EDGERTON, GUY PEARCE, LUKE FORD, JACKI WEAVER, SULLIVAN STAPLETON & JAMES FRECHEVILLE

RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) FEBRUARY 25 (UK)

David Michôd's confident debut feature *Animal Kingdom* is a calm, studied approach to the crime genre that very sensibly plays out more like a family drama.

Relative newcomer James Frecheville plays Joshua Cody, a teenage kid who is drawn into a world of crime against his will when, in the opening moments of the film, his mother overdoses on heroin and dies. Enter Jacki Weaver as Janine Cody, his grandmother who, it transpires, his mother had good reasons for trying to keep him away from. She lives with her three sons Andrew, Craig and Darren, who are involved with armed robbery.

Josh's involvement in this world is auxiliary at best; indeed, his reactions to the world around him are quiet and stunted. He doesn't talk

much. He's never quite comfortable, in particular when he's around the eldest of the brothers, Andrew (known as 'Pope') played effectively by Ben Mendelsohn. Josh's opening monologue is the most we'll hear out of him over the course of the film. He's quiet, introspected and easily influenced. As the film moves on, and things begin to go wrong, Josh will have to decide where his allegiances really lie.

Animal Kingdom enters a genre filled with successful and critically acclaimed portrayals of families involved in crime, from the *Godfather* trilogy to *Goodfellas*. Michôd, though, chooses to make his film a drama about family rather than a drama about crime, and in many ways the choice pays off. The film rarely depicts violent events, and what set-pieces there are are subtle and short, though well-staged.

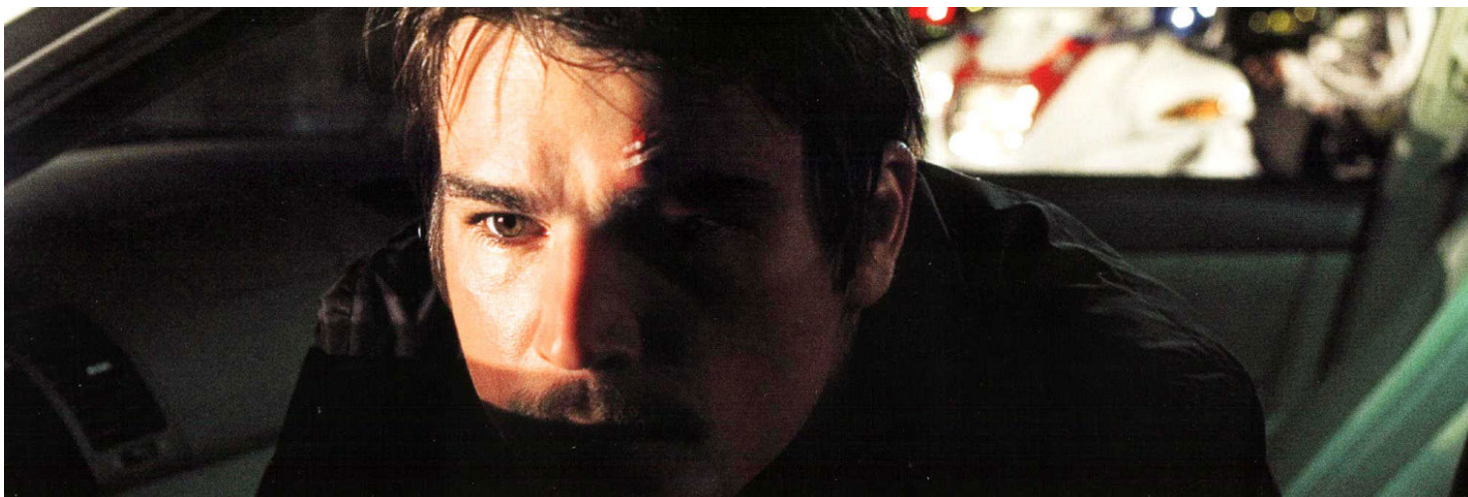
The cast is strong. At the beginning of the film, Joel Edgerton cuts a charismatic figure as Barry Brown (Pope's friend) and initially seems to be the best role model for Josh. Later, as things begin to unravel, Josh is left more and more to deal with Pope's unpredictable and ever more desperate actions. Frecheville isn't called upon

to do too much acting – his character's blank canvas is not unlikable but a little frustrating at times – but the one scene in which he gets to cut loose is performed well. Later, Guy Pearce – the film's biggest name actor, but not its star – brings his usual class to proceedings.

Animal Kingdom meanders along to a melodramatic, almost operatic score by Antony Partos, which at times is very effective but does stray into overblown territory here and there, and is particularly noticeable given that graphic set pieces and emotional outbursts are not what the film is about. Michôd's direction is calm, unhurried and confident; impressive for a debut feature.

And yet, despite *Animal Kingdom's* numerous qualities, I did not love it. Perhaps Josh is simply too passive to make for an entirely satisfactory protagonist, perhaps the characters (though they are played well) are too stock to be truly exciting. But it wouldn't be right to end on a negative note; the film, after all, is well made, well acted and highlights Michôd as a director to look out for.

★★★★★



I COME WITH THE RAIN

DIRECTED BY ANH HUNG TRAN STARRING JOSH HARTNETT, TRAN NU YÊN-KHÊ, BYUNG-HUN LEE, ELIAS KOTEAS, TAKUYA KIMURA, SHAWN YUE & EUSEBIO PONCELA

RELEASED MARCH 25 (UK) TBC (USA)

Films often disappoint us. Sometimes they fall short of our high expectations, sometimes we are prepared for poor quality but they turn out to be really terrible. But it is rare for a film to be so utterly beyond commendation – to be such an unmitigated assault on decency, sense and aesthetic value – that it actually offends and angers us. *I Come With The Rain* is just such a film. Tran Anh Hung has attempted to create a psychological noir thriller that incorporates gangster elements and metaphysical, religious symbolism. He has done all of these things, but in a blinded and inconsistent way that betrays a void of artistic competence and complete disregard for the complexities of cinematic storytelling.

Troubled ex-cop Kline (Hartnett) has been employed as a private detective by a faceless billionaire whose son, Shitao (Kimura), has disappeared after moving to the Far East to help an orphanage. Kline chases a tip off to Hong Kong and meets up with an old buddy, detective Meng Zi (Yue). Unbeknownst

to them, Shitao is living in a makeshift roadside bivouac, and he has discovered that he can miraculously cure people by hugging them until cuts appear all over his body. Meanwhile, crime boss Su Dongpo (Lee) is forced to watch as his own brother kidnaps his girlfriend and makes off with a large sum of money. The brother is shot, but he manages to escape and makes it to his destination just before he bleeds out; he was trying to reach Shitao.

Shitao escapes with Dongpo's girlfriend and keeps her tied up while she recovers from drug addiction. Meanwhile Kline attempts to find Shitao by staring at pictures of his mutilated body (pictures obtained from an earlier routine police investigation). The pictures spark difficult memories for Kline, and we discover that he was let go from the police force after suffering a nervous breakdown and identifying too closely with a crazed psychopathic killer that he was hunting. Shitao allows Dongpo's girlfriend to go back to the city, but when she decides to return to her new love she inadvertently leads Dongpo to him. Dongpo shoots Shitao repeatedly and nails him to a board of wood (if you have missed the whole 'Christian symbolism' thing don't worry, it is MUCH more obvious in the film).

Kline inexplicably figures out that Dongpo must know where Shitao is (despite having done nothing other than suffer a few flashbacks), and Dongpo even more inexplicably agrees to tell him! The film ends (which I honestly thought might never happen)

with Kline taking Christ, sorry, Shitao down from the cross and heading home.

As far as the noir crime thriller is concerned, the bare semblance of a narrative that Tran Anh Hung does provide (and there isn't much there, I assure you) is illogical, unoriginal, and utterly dull. As far as the religious symbolism is concerned, there is absolutely no justification for turning Shitao into some sort of Christ-figure, and it in no way fits with the tonal and thematic qualities of the story. The only remotely commendable element of the story is Kline's psychological meltdown as the memories of his past seep back into his conscious.

To make matters worse, the director relies entirely on the wonderful music of Godspeed You! Black Emperor and Radiohead to string sequences together and provide the film with some sort of emotional and tonal backbone. Both of these bands are notoriously shy and rarely allow their music to be used for films, so to see their entire discographies being butchered and abused in such a lazy way adds to the quite physical, nauseous pain of watching this film.

This could have been a taut noir crime thriller, combining the fast pace of modern Asian crime cinema with an *Insomnia* story of a troubled cop who must overcome his own issues to find his quarry. Instead it is a meandering and meaningless pile of drivel that does a disservice to its many fine performances.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★



SANCTUM

DIRECTED BY ALISTER GRIERSON **STARRING** RICHARD ROXBURGH, RHYS WAKEFIELD, ALICE PARKINSON, DAN WYLLIE, IOAN GRUFFUD & CHRISTOPHER BAKER

RELEASED OUT NOW

James Cameron did not direct this caving thriller, but you'd be forgiven for thinking that he did, given the extent to which his name has been plastered all over it. In actual fact, the main connection is that Alister Grierson's debut feature was filmed using the Fusion Camera System which Cameron developed and used to film *Avatar*.

The film's story – apparently based on the experiences of Andrew Wright, who co-wrote the film – follows a group of divers who become trapped in a complex network of underground caves when a freak tropical storm floods the entrance. The film's pacing and structure will be familiar to many – this is, in many ways, standard disaster movie fare. We are welcomed to the characters – laughing and grinning irritatingly – in a brief introduction before the basics of caving and the environment the film is to be set in are breathlessly explained. Then it's down, down, down, as quickly as possible to get to the action.

To be fair to the film, its breezy first 20 minutes turn out to be less annoying than they initially appear, and this is a feeling that comes to embody the entire thing. Rhys Wakefield's (*Home And Away*) Josh, for example, first appears to be an irritating grinch-machine, only to develop some character as the film goes on and actually becomes rather likable. By comparison, Ioan Gruffud – as Carl Hurley, the man bankrolling the operation – is thankfully stripped of what appears to be the main role as time goes by. His performance is unexpectedly annoying, though it's hard to tell if this is the fault of the actor or the script. Probably both.

The script, incidentally, isn't the film's strongest asset. There is some pleasing use of Coleridge's poetry on display here, and it could hardly be called an inept script, but it is both derivative and unsubtle at times. Witness, for example, one diver's considered reaction to the death of one of his supposedly well-loved colleagues: "F**k."

But the film grows on you. The father-son dynamic between Josh and his father Frank is as stock as they come, but by the end it becomes the film's focus, a choice that, at the start, you wouldn't expect to have worked. Richard Roxburgh (as Frank) is a grizzled Aussie caver who often sounds

like the insides of his throat are themselves a cave, lined with ancient rock, so vigorously does he grind through his dialogue, but again this becomes less of an issue as his more human side comes out.

The characters are clichéd and the script has flaws, problems that could've been overcome by great acting turns, but unfortunately there are a few less-than-stellar performances in here. So why isn't this film terrible? Primarily because it does a good job with the set pieces. The film is suitably claustrophobic (like a drowned *The Descent*) and does a good job of establishing the 'man vs nature' sensation of little humans battling for their lives against nature. It also, pleasingly, doesn't sugarcoat the dangers its unfortunate protagonists find themselves in, and nor does it ever stretch plausibility.

Its flaws are initially off-putting, but stick with it and *Sanctum* does do a good job of establishing tension and comes with some well-staged set pieces. The 3-D itself is, as is so often the case, underwhelming. The film looks impressive at times, but none of that is down to the 3-D. It seemed like a great opportunity to use the medium, but in reality some cascading water effects are the best you're going to get. Still waiting for the 'game-changer' then.

★★★★★



HEREAFTER

DIRECTED BY CLINT EASTWOOD STARRING MATT DAMON, CÉCILE DE FRANCE, FRANKIE McLAREN, GEORGE McLAREN, BRYCE DALLAS HOWARD, RICHARD KIND & JAY MOHR

RELEASED OUT NOW

Hereafter stands as proof that when talented people get together to make a film, the results are far from locked down. Clint Eastwood continues to be prolific in his output – despite being in his 80s – but his latest is an unfortunate misstep that hopefully his forthcoming J. Edgar Hoover biopic (starring Leonardo DiCaprio) will rectify.

Gathering together big American stars – Matt Damon and Bryce Dallas Howard – with international ones such as Belgian actress Cécile de France, Eastwood directs from Peter Morgan's (*The Queen*, *Frost/Nixon*) script. The story takes the ever-popular multiple strands approach. Damon plays George, a man who may or may not possess the ability to converse with the dead – the film seems to suggest that he can, but his ambiguous and informal 'readings' leave room for doubt (a sensible choice). De France plays a young, popular news anchor and Frankie and George McLaren play twin brothers in London. These stories take place across the globe, but naturally script contrivances conspire to bring them together as time goes by.

Damon is a good actor who has been doing interesting things recently, but his presence isn't enough to rescue this muddled film. De France is his equal – perhaps even the strongest element of the whole thing – but it matters little. The opening set piece in Thailand should be shocking and tragic, but in reality it is lukewarm, let down by sub-par CGI. It also ends with a laughable image of a child's teddy bear stranded in flood water that sets the tone of things to come.

There is an oddly saccharine feeling about this film that is grating and off-putting, even though it is trying so hard not to be. The film concerns itself with the age-old question 'what happens when we die?' (two of the strands involve characters Googling that exact question) but in reality has very little to say about it. George's inability to touch people without contacting the dead and his wish not to perform any more readings is the film's strongest outlet – his burgeoning relationship with Melanie (Howard) being one of the few character scenes that works. Indeed, despite De Frances' performance, Damon's third of the film is the best.

But even that suffers badly under the laborious, underwhelming script, which gets George to tell us in no uncertain terms (in case we hadn't guessed so already) that his psychic abilities are "not a blessing; they're a curse." And he says it twice, presuming perhaps that we'd fallen asleep the first

time. The third of the film set in London fares worst. It feels nasty to denigrate young actors but the twins here give awfully stunted performances, fatally lumbered with the script's most clichéd, uninspiring moments. At least the second half of the film doesn't call for Frankie McLaren to deliver too many lines of dialogue.

Hamstrung by the flaws in the script, the film's crass sentimentality is laid bare. It isn't half as deep as it wants you to think it is. Marie's (De France) quest to find out about the afterlife leads her to an institution where – after watching a young woman die in bed surrounded by her family for no reason – she is given a box of 'scientific evidence' regarding experiences of death by a woman in a lab coat. Then she writes a novel about it.

All of the strands are weak in their own ways, but the film at least would have had redemptive moments if it wasn't structured so badly. It really is a drag. The second half feels like an eternity – perhaps George really can interact with the afterlife; he could well be in it.

And then we get the climax, the meeting of the strands, which, while not without interest (and a smidgen of emotive quality) is anticlimactic and, in one instance, painfully sentimental. It rounds off a thoroughly disappointing film. Here's hoping Eastwood has got his dud out of the way with *J. Edgar* on the way.

★★★★★



PAUL

DIRECTED BY GREG MOTTOLA STARRING SIMON PEGG, NICK FROST, SETH ROGEN, JASON BATEMAN, KRISTEN WIIG, JANE LYNCH, BILL HADER, JOE LO TRUGLIO & JANE LYNCH

RELEASED JANUARY 14 (UK) MARCH 18 (UK)

With *Spaced*, the triumvirate of Simon Pegg, Nick Frost and Edgar Wright took the British nation by storm with their dilapidated, lo-fi take on cinematic conventions. *Shaun Of The Dead* was a superb debut feature, perfectly transplanting their quirky surrealism and humble love of genre movies onto the silver screen. But the Midas touch faded and their follow-up, *Hot Fuzz*, was given a deservedly luke-warm reception. Now that Wright has forged his own path with *Scott Pilgrim*, Pegg and Frost have lost their world-beating confidence and have teamed up with their American equals (director Greg Mottola and actor Seth Rogen) in an attempt to bolster the allure of their latest release.

Unfortunately, there is no escaping the fact that the unique vision of their early work relied entirely on a humility and, frankly, poverty that they no longer possess. As their budgets race away from them, the scope of their stories is forced to give chase, and their fragile muse is left huffing and panting in the background. They

want to honour the wonderfully kitsch and camp genre films of their youth, but all they manage to do these days is mimic them in a style more suited to the Wayans Brothers than the toast of 90's British comedy.

The story begins and ends at the San Diego Convention Centre – where Comic-Con is in full swing – but while the characters disappear into the heat of the Nevada desert, the story never really leaves Comic-Con at all. After the giddy excitement of the Convention, Graeme (Pegg) and Clive (Frost) board their rented Winnebago and head out into the dusty Nevada dusk on Route 375 (Extraterrestrial Highway in geek nomenclature). But they quickly find themselves taking on another passenger... Paul.

Paul crashed his spaceship into a farm near Area 51 back in the 50s, and has spent the last half century as a guest of the US secret intelligence services, helping everyone from scientists to film directors better understand extraterrestrial life forms. But in that space of time he has also become a rude, opinionated pothead with a rebellious streak.

Paul is desperate to escape from his hosts, who have decided that the only way to elicit more information from Paul is to cut him open. Graeme and Clive might be the last two people on Earth you would choose to help you evade capture – two dim-witted and painfully considerate Englishmen

whose survival tactic since the onset of puberty has been to keep their heads below the parapet, buried deep in a comic book; but somehow this ragtag gang stay one step ahead of the screwball government agents (Hader, Truglio and Bateman), darting across the desert in search of the spot where Paul's family can rescue him.

Unfortunately there is less synergy to be found in the real life 'ragtag gang' of 'Pegg/Frost' and 'Mottola/Rogen'. Each pairing finds moments of inspired humour – and Rogen comes closest to saving the film by channeling Dale from *Pineapple Express* into a CGI body suit – but there is no sense that the foursome have been collectively inspired to new heights. There is something faintly but obtrusively awkward about the interaction between the British leads and their American friends.

Perhaps it is the physical limitations of the CGI alien against the live action humans; perhaps it is the yawning chasm between Rogen's lackadaisical Californian drawl and Pegg and Frost's glitchy neurotic Englishness; perhaps it is the fact that Mottola never saw the point in offering directorial advice to the two people who perhaps needed it most, on the basis that they wrote the film in the first place. Whatever the issue, the hiccups of comedy genius feel like hollow victories in a generally average film.

★★★★★



THE DILEMMA

DIRECTED BY RON HOWARD **STARRING** VINCE VAUGHN, KEVIN JAMES, JENNIFER CONNELLY, WINONA RYDER, CHANNING TATUM, QUEEN LATIFA & AMY MORTON

RELEASED OUT NOW

Though it's Ron Howard's talents behind the camera, *The Dilemma* was only ever going to be a 'Vince Vaughn comedy'. Now in-amongst the comedy A-list, trademarking his commanding awkward-come-charming, often improvised, dialogue, he's got an easygoing appeal; inoffensive and watchable.

The Dilemma puts Vaughn alongside frequent co-star Kevin James as college friends and business partners, developing innovative engine technology to sell to the wider market. On the eve of a meeting with a major car manufacturer, however, a shock-

ing discovery threatens to rock both of their lives. Scoping out a location to propose to his girlfriend, Ronny (Vaughn) catches a glimpse of Nick's (James) wife with another man, and is left faced with the conundrum of whether to expose Geneva's deceit and sacrifice their big break, or hold off and take the time to pick a more measured next move.

While *The Dilemma* gleams Hollywood polish, that's not enough any more, and Ron Howard's comedy feels lazy when it comes to actually putting the effort in to entertain. There's definite potential in the concept but the plot fails to develop in the second act before struggling to bring it all back together for the finale.

The cast are effortlessly watchable, as you might expect from a bunch of stars that have worked on numerous productions over the years, but none turn in comedy classic performances. It's same old, same old from Vaughn,

and he seems destined for to play the same character for the rest of his career, though none of the roles really stretch your imagination at all.

Offering a strange mix of slapstick and dark one-liners, there's an unfortunate lack of jokes that really work. Those that do come off feel straight out of Vaughn and James' chemistry, rather than writer Allan Lobe's script, whom is certainly yet to cover himself in glory after also writing the similarly languid *The Switch*.

Ronny's gambling sub-plot, depth into 'other man', Zip (Tatum), and an entirely pointless Queen Latifa role, 'lady wood' and all, only add further unnecessary bulk, and though the film at times plays ill-ease in the right way, the positives are overshadowed by its misgivings. Hollywood gloss will paper over a few of *The Dilemma*'s problems but you'll leave the cinema more feeling indifferent than anything else.

★★★★★



YOGI BEAR

DIRECTED BY ERIC BREVIG **STARRING** DAN AYKROYD, JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE, TOM CAVANAGH, ANNA FARRIS, T.J. MILLER, ANDREW DALY & NATHAN CORDROY

RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) FEBRUARY 11 (UK)

As such a beloved character in so many people's childhoods, it was only a matter of time before Hannah-Barbera's Yogi Bear made his silver-screen debut in full live action/CGI form, but after the legendary animators both passed away this last century, it's the first feature film of one of their properties to be developed without their aid, and sadly, it really shows.

With Yogi (Aykroyd) and Boo Boo (Timberlake) failing to curtail their penchant for stealing visitors' picnic baskets, as Yellowstone's visitor numbers drop, it's quickly becoming one of the more disposable assets to the local county, and that's before you take into account Mayor Brown's profligate spending. Sitting in the middle of a financial crisis, Brown (Daly) is on the look out for a get (his city) rich quick scheme as he hopes to boost his repu-

tation before running for Governor, and unfortunately, he deems Yellowstone fair game to be re-categorised, and cashed in.

With their park on the verge of closure, rangers Smith (Cavanagh) and Jones (Miller) go all out to raise money and prove Yellowstone can run to a profit, but when Yogi is involved, nothing ever runs that smoothly.

After T.J. Miller's wonderful audition video – if you haven't seen it, hit *YouTube* to find him in a mock scene with a real life bear – I was genuinely excited about *Yogi Bear*, but sadly the film never even comes close to matching Miller's video's spontaneity or fun.

Perhaps as should have been expected, the story and script are highly uninventive, and the dialogue and jokes so lazy and blazon; there's no subtlety to the narrative, and especially to Yogi. As the central character, he's on screen for the vast majority of the film, and though there are references in his demeanor to the original series, with Aykroyd's obnoxious, booming voicing, Yogi comes across as arrogant and entirely unlikeable, rather than innocent in his mischievous picnic games. As a result, and with most of the film's scripted jokes falling at his

feet, *Yogi Bear* barely raises a grin, it's only Miller and Daly's charisma and ad-lib that goes some way to saving it.

Adding to his now commendable reputation as an actor, Timberlake does a reasonable job as Boo Boo but only the aforementioned T.J. Miller and Andrew Daly come out of the film with their reputations improved. With witty one-liners and each an absorbing on-screen presence, had this been a film centred around them, and not Yogi Bear, it might have been worthy of the lofty \$80m budget.

As a love interest for the largely lost Ranger Smith, played by the overshadowed Tom Cavanagh, Anna Faris' character is similarly disposable.

Not helping the already tired Yogi act, the CGI animation is fairly slack throughout, if quite seamlessly integrated into the live action world. While the 'made-for-3-D' quirks, as items fly out of the screen, quickly grow very annoying.

Very close to dreadful, and certainly more than boring, T.J. Miller and Andrew Daly make *Yogi Bear* watchable, but they're not on screen for nearly enough time to make this an entertaining watch.

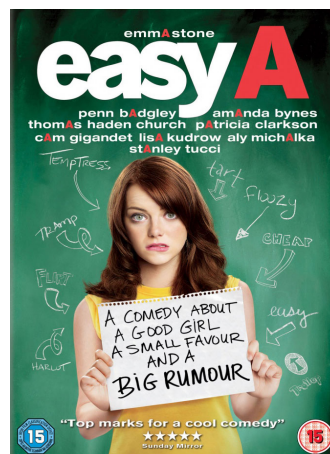
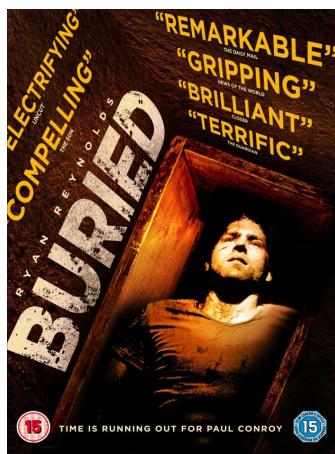


BURIED

Hugely effective thriller as a contractor based in war-torn Iraq, wakes up buried alive, deep beneath the surface, with nothing but a cell phone and lighter to find out why he's there and attempt to escape near certain death.

Film ★★★★★

Extras ★★★★★



EASY A

Overly styled teen comedy about a girl who pretends to sleep with boys in her school to enhance their reputation, only after losing sight of her own personality, must take a step back and reconsider what's really best for her.

Film ★★★★★

Extras ★★★★★

DESPICABLE ME

Easily accessible CGI comedy about supervillain Gru, whom after taking in three young orphan girls to use as pawns in another of his evil schemes, develops a softer side and finds out there are more to life than villainy.

Film ★★★★★

Extras ★★★★★



PARANORMAL ACTIVITY 2

A sequel that didn't need to be made but wets the appetite for what will undoubtedly now become a long-running franchise. More of the same here isn't a bad thing.

Film ★★★★★

Extras ★★★★★

DUE DATE

Road trip comedy that sadly just isn't funny enough, even with the talents of Zach Galifianakis on show, and *The Hangover*/*Old School* director Todd Phillips behind the camera. Boasted big potential but crucially fails to deliver.

Film ★★★★★

Extras ★★★★★



RED

Underrated and surprisingly enjoyable action-comedy, a retired, former black-ops CIA agent is forced to go on the run after, out of the blue, his home is raided and a target is placed on his head. Bruce Willis is back to near his best.

Film ★★★★★

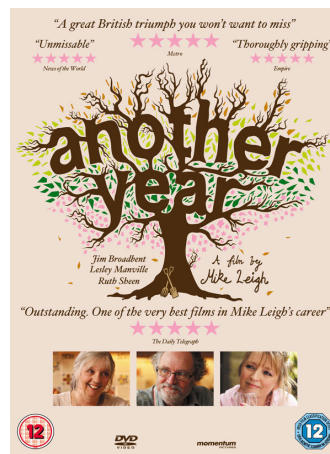
Extras ★★★★★

ALPHA AND OMEGA

Simple and formulaic animal adventure, aimed at kids of a very young age, two wolves are captured by rangers and must find their way home in time to stop a fight with a neighbouring pack that will change things forever.

Film ★★★★★

Extras ★★★★★




ANOTHER YEAR

Certainly not the upbeat drama you might expect, Mike Leigh's lauded *Another Year* follows four seasons in the life of a happy suburban couple, as for friends and family around them, things start to fall apart.

Film ★★★★★

Extras ★★★★★



TO CELEBRATE THE
RELEASE OF **BURIED** ON
DVD AND BLU-RAY, WE'RE
GIVING YOU THE CHANCE
TO WIN ONE OF THREE
COPIES FOR YOURSELF

TO BE IN WITH A CHANCE OF WINNING, SIMPLY ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTION:

RYAN REYNOLDS IS SET TO STAR IN WHICH COMIC BOOK
SUPERHERO MOVIE OUT LATER THIS YEAR?

- A. GREEN LANTERN
- B. CAPTAIN AMERICA: THE FIRST AVENGER
- C. DAY OF THE TENTACLE

SEND YOUR ANSWER TO [COMPETITIONS@FANTHEFIREMAGAZINE.COM](mailto:competitions@fanthefiremagazine.com)
DEADLINE 28/02/11





NO COUNTRY FOR
SMALL MEN BY
FLORIAN TREMP



MOBILE HOMES BY
PETER GARFIELD



OUT ON A LIMB
BY ALEXANDRA
DEMENKOVA



CHAINED TO THE
WORLD BY MC BESS



NO COUNTRY
FOR SMALL MEN

PHOTOGRAPHY FLORIAN TREMP (FLORIAN TREMP.IX.COM)























MOBILE HOMES

PHOTOGRAPHY PETER GARFIELD (PETERGARFIELD.NET)

ART © PETER GARFIELD/LICENSED BY VAGA, NEW YORK, NY



























01010135

ПОЖАРНЫЙ
ВОДОЕМ
200 М

Out on a limb

PHOTOGRAPHY ALEXANDRA DEMENKOVA (LIGHTSTALKERS.ORG/ALEXANDRA_DEMENKOVA)























2010





















Chained to the world

PHOTOGRAPHY MC BESS (MCBESS.COM)

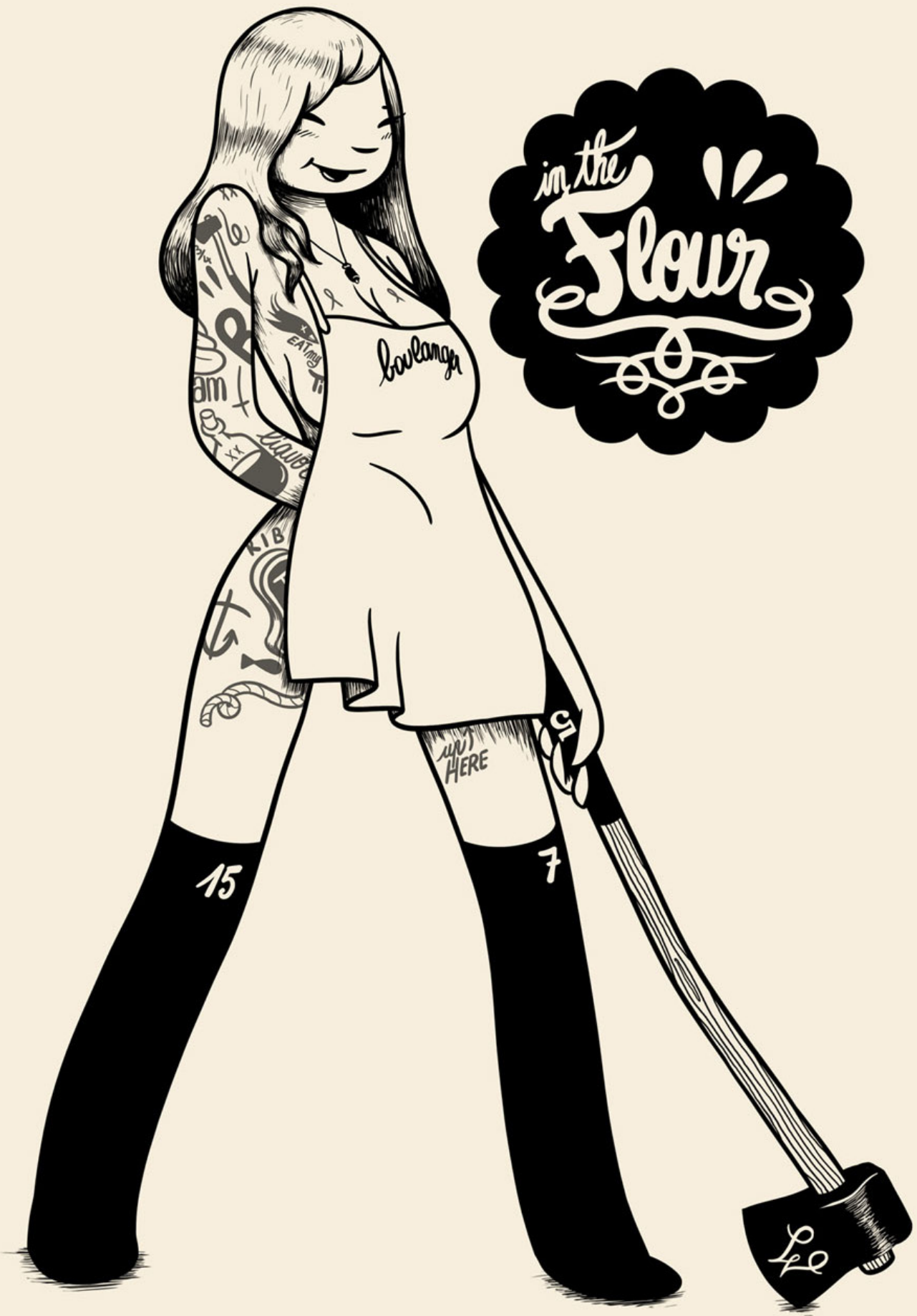






viande
motel

75823 stroked



les Diamantes

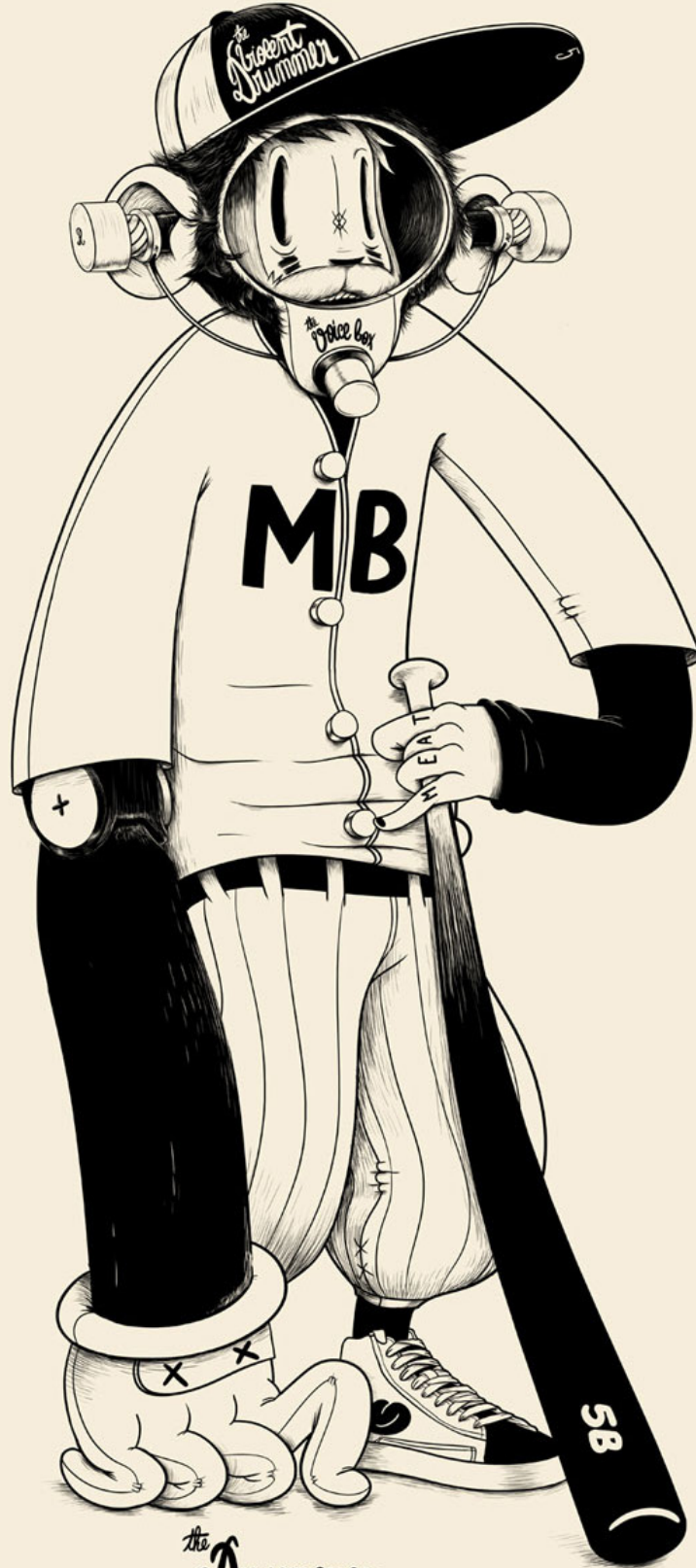
AH LES COQUINES





the Dunker

\$



the Drummer

the Lonely Place Where you can
Fuck Off $\frac{3}{4}$



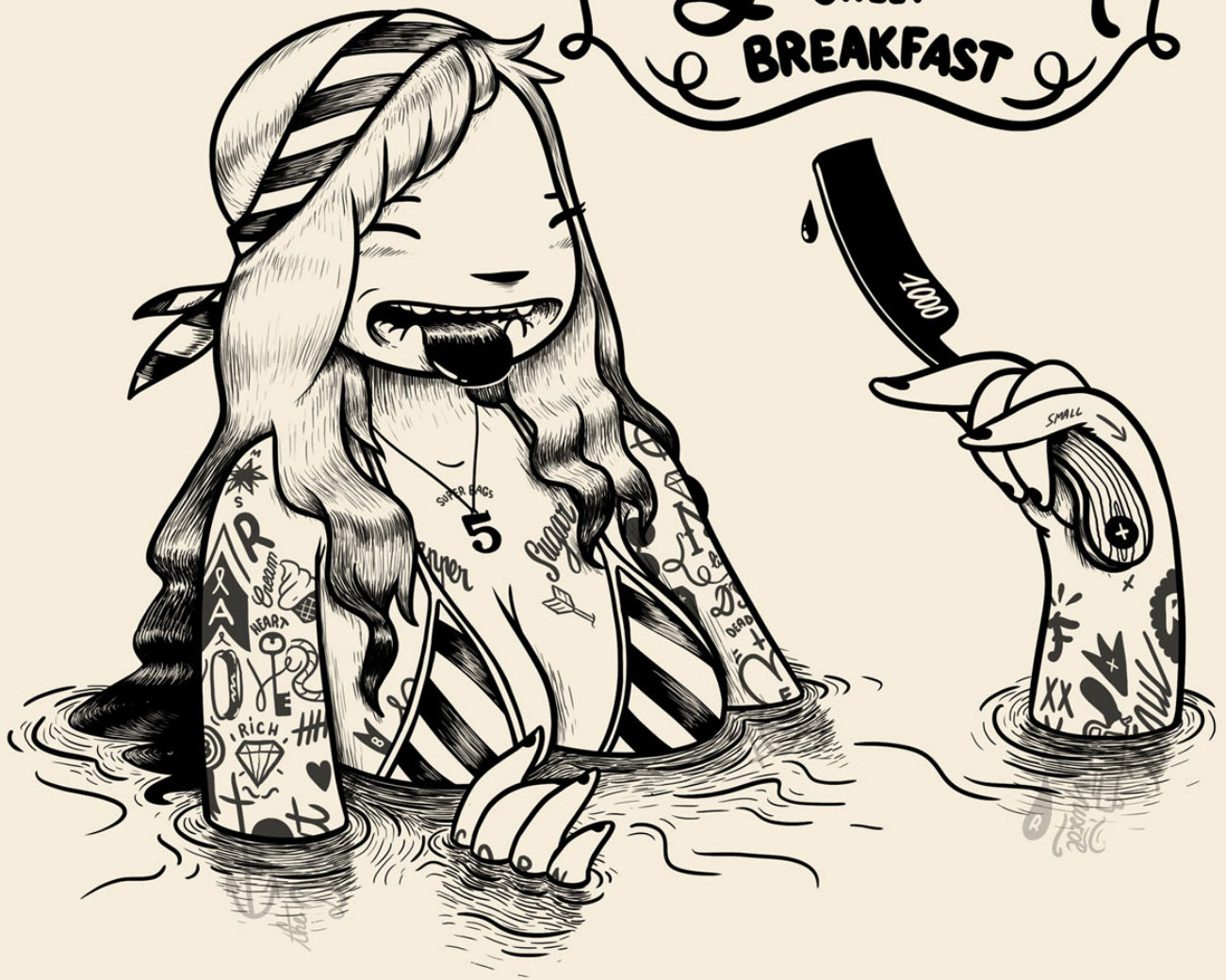
REALLY ENJOY
the *Varsity Jacket* XX

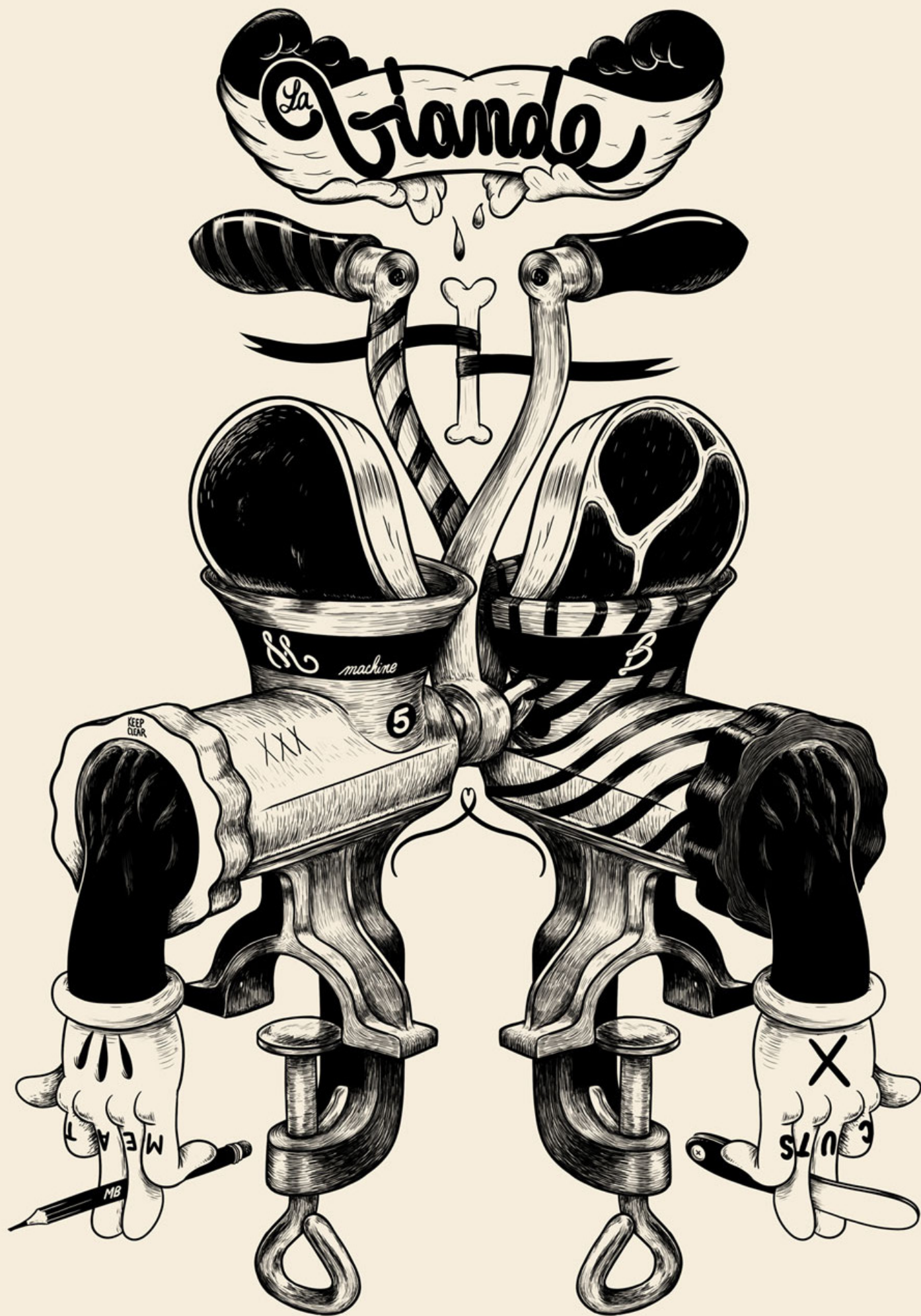
Hoy
titties



Sugar & Milk

SWEET
BREAKFAST









ya pas de nuages
MAIS où sont-ils
ces MERDES

Fr

Dieu

Ah mais
ta gueuze

le coque

le
GEANT

M
RID EYE

+

2



STYLE



MADE MEN
BY ISA JACOB



TEARS FOR FEARS BY
MAGNUS ÖSTERHULT



V FOR VENDETTA
BY JUSTIN HOLLAR



THE GHOST OF YOU
BY LINUS MORALES



Made men

PHOTOGRAPHY ISA JACOB (ISAJACOB.COM)

STYLING MY RINGSTED (UNIQUE LOOK)

HAIR METTE THORSGAARD (UNIQUE LOOK)

MAKE-UP ZENIA JAEGER (UNIQUE LOOK)

MODELS ANDREAS, ESSEN, MARTIN, PETER BEYER, SYLVESTER HENRIKSEN & THEO (UNIQUE)

RETOUCHING MUNZER HODAYFA (WETOUGH)

























STYLE





PHOTOGRAPHY MAGNUS ÖSTERHULT (OSTERHULT.COM)
MODEL ANNA HÖGGREN
MAKE-UP DENISE LYRÉN (LINNDENISE.BLOGG.SE)

Tears for fears









STYLE







V for vendetta

PHOTOGRAPHY JUSTIN HOLLAR (JUSTINHOLLAR.COM)
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED BY NYLON JAPAN































STYLE

THE GHOST OF YOU

PHOTOGRAPHY LINUS MORALES (LINUSMORALES.SE)

RETOUCHING CHRISTIAN REJE

MODEL ALMA HELGESSON (KID OF TOMORROW)

ASSISTANT LENA SVANOLD

CLOTHING VINTAGE















STYLE







NEXT ISSUE
AVAILABLE
MARCH 4



