

### Black market magazines



don't read a lot of magazines. Sure, as a magazine editor I probably should, but really there just aren't that many out there that grab my attention. I bought a copy of *Purple* recently, their spring/summer 2011 issue, and rarely have I ever been more bored. The articles were uninvolving, the fashion uninventive, and Terry Richardson's cover story as laboursome as all of his work since the fantastic 2010 Pirelli Calendar. So where have all the good magazines gone? That's a good question.

Until it was taken out of publication in the first quarter of 2009, *Arena* was doing pretty much everything right, it just couldn't boast a readership to match the content. With intelligent articles about both accessible and expansive subjects, it opened your life to new experiences you could actu-

ally go out and get. And not in a Nuts magazine, "let's all go on a paintballing trip" kind of way.

With the dawn of the iPad, and Virgin's *Project* magazine launch, they stole pretty much the entire editorial and creative staff from *FHM*, but it hasn't really paid off. Let down by a lack of sense and order, each issue to date has felt like a mash of random subjects, and certainly far from the collective reading experience we've come to expect from magazines pushing themselves as leaders in the game.

And so to *Wired*. The American edition of *Wired* is probably the only magazine I'll read on a monthly basis, and this is cover to cover. Even for them, however, the latest issue was a marvel of meteoric proportions. Entitled 'The Underworld Exposed', the themed content spanned every-

thing from organised crime and the drug trade to winning every time on scratchcards and black market organ trading. And this is without an incredible conspiracy theory article that only made the website.

Though their art directors are still too lazy to layout full articles in one cohesive spread (rather than push half into an overspill section right at the back), it's clear the editorial staff know what readers want, and that's an insight into worlds the general public just don't have the time, resources or heavies to delve into themselves.

So the next move for **FAN THE FIRE**? Well I guess our moles in the Secret Service, Italian mafia and Russian trafficking rings better get working on their pieces.

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**

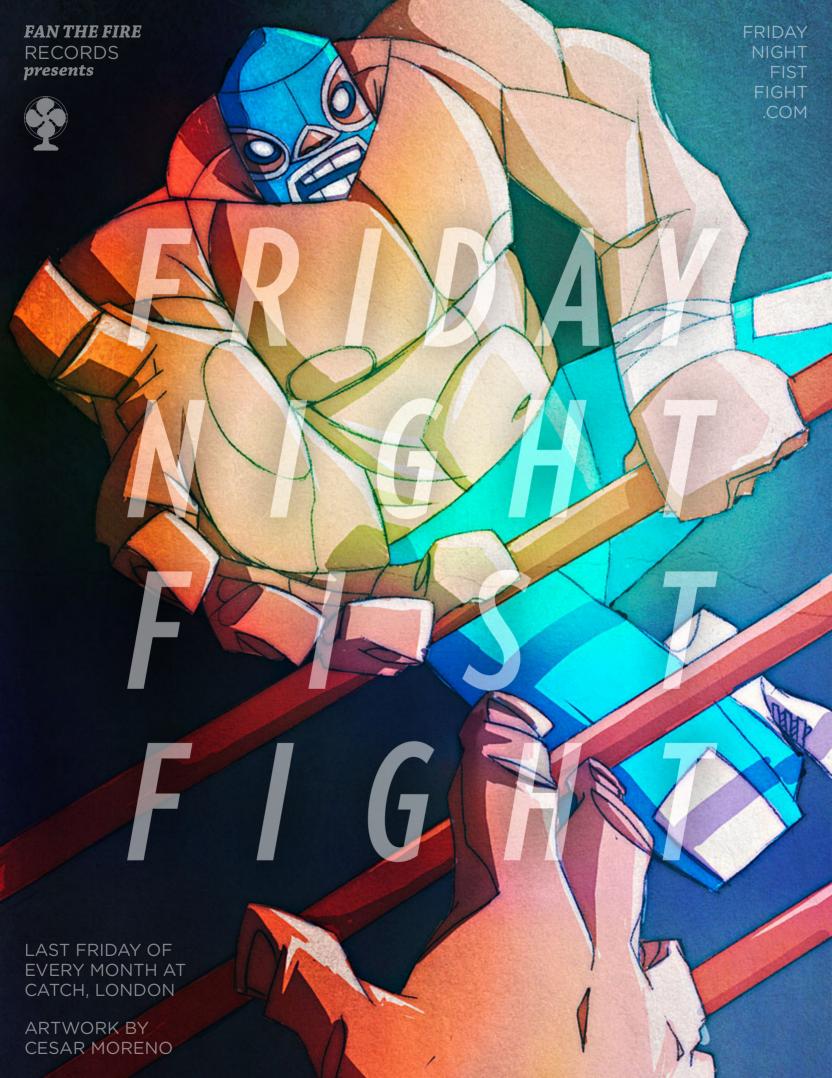
We've got some very exciting things planned, so stay tuned

& much more

Coming soon to

the iPad app store







#### PAGE 14

### PAGE 30





### PAGE 76

### PAGE 132



### March 2011

#### **MUSIC**

### **FEATURES**

- 12 Baths
- 13 Odd Future
- 14 Karima Francis interview
- 16 Spring Offensive
- 17 Yelle

### **ALBUM REVIEWS**

18 Album round-up, including The Strokes, The Vaccines, Panic! At The Disco, Middle Brother and Wild Palms

### FILM

#### **PREVIEWS**

Your Highness
Crazy, Stupid, Love
Prometheus
Larry Crowne
Apollo 18
I Saw The Devil

#### **FEATURES**

- 28 Norwegian Wood
- 30 Alma Har'el and Joe Lindquist interview
- 34 EMD cinema
- 36 Joanna Hogg interview

#### REVIEWS

- 40 I Am Number Four 46 You Will Meet A Tall 41 Dark Stranger Oranges And Sunshine 42 The Tempest Unknown 43 48 The Resident The Rite 44 The Adjustment Bureau 49 Hall Pass
- 45 Submarine

### **DVD & BLU-RAY REVIEWS**

DVD round-up, including The Kids Are All Right,

50 We Are What We Are, Let Me In and Unstoppable

#### ART

#### **FEATURES**

- 54 I know, I hear
- 76 Out of the wilderness
- 94 Backflashes
- 110 Hurricanes for hire

### STYLE

#### **FEATURES**

- 122 Flying upside down
- 132 Static on the wire
- 150 The breakfast club
- 164 Lunch is for wimps



mail@fanthefiremagazine.com

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

### Sam Bathe

MUSIC EDITOR

Alex Brammer

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** 

Umit Benan, Jack Crossing, Simone Falcetta, Ruediger Glatz, Justin Hollar, Chelsee Ivan, Jessica Klingelfuss, Jeff Olson, Juan Carlos Solon, Emma Wilson

**COVER BY** 

PHOTOGRAPHY JACK CROSSING 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

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







THE RETURN OF **PANIC! AT THE DISCO** 

**DARKROOM** 

**SXSW ANTICIPATION** 



**HOW I MET YOUR MOTHER DOUBLE** 





**RED SKULL** 

**SEASON RENEWAL** 



**THE X-MEN: FIRST CLASS TRAILER** 



**RECEIVING FX VIRAL GOODIES IN THE POST** 



**KILLSPENCER BUSINESS MESSENGER** 







THAT BEADY EYE ARE YET TO BREAK UP

DARKROOM'S PRICES

THE WAIT UNTIL SXSW







**MASSIMO BUSACCA** 

THE UN-IMPORTABILITY
OF NI NO KUNI







DVDS THAT COUNT ITS OWN TRAILER AS A 'SPECIAL FEATURE'

POINTLESS REVIEW EMBARGOES

**UPS** 







With the ever-evolving electro hip-hop scene in Los Angeles in full swing, the last six months has seen a multitude of celebrated producers and beatmakers, making their mark. From Flying Lotus to Madlib, the West Coast seems to churning out so many fresh and innovative artists, it's almost difficult to keep track. And now another name to add to the list is Baths, the moniker of Will Wiesenfeld.

The 21 year-old is a classically trained pianist, and has been releasing music since he was 14 through an assortment of names and projects. Wiesenfeld though adopted the name of Baths last year, and released his debut album, *Cerulean*, on independent label Anticon late last year. The entire album was recorded over a two-month period, with the vast majority being written and taped in his bedroom, and was extremely well received, making an array of 'best-of' lists last year including the legendary *Pitchfork*, *The A.V. Club* and *Drowned In Sound*.

Cerulean is a medley of so many different influences and styles, mere genre tags simply don't do it justice.

The album is dominated by lush instrumental arrangements and layers of unorthodox sounds; Bjork and Toro Y Moi are obvious influences, but what makes the album stand out are the little touches that work their way into

each song. Falsetto vocal samples,
clicking pens and
palliative piano
loops make themselves individually
aware long after
multiple listens.
This beautiful
collage of sound is
literally bursting
at the seams with
new and original
ideas.

Baths are only one string to Wiesenfeld's bow, with another sideproject called Geo-

tic. He released a free album named *Mend* at the start of the year, which is far more ambient in style and evokes the early catalogue of the great Brian

Eno. Wiesenfeld is also a frequent remixer, with stand out work for Gold Panda and Fol Chen, amongst others. And then there's his other alias, [Postfoetus], through which Wiesenfeld has written four albums and three EPs.

In a recent interview, Wiesenfeld announced that he is the process of recording the follow-up to Cerulean, and promises the album to be far darker and antithetical compared with the positivity of Cerulean. He is currently coming to the end of a US tour as Baths and plans to play some European festivals in the summer. It

will be hugely interesting to see how brightly the prodigal producer's star can ultimately shine. We're guessing very, and you should too.

THE ENTIRE ALBUM WAS
RECORDED OVER A TWOMONTH PERIOD, WITH THE
VAST MAJORITY BEING
WRITTEN AND TAPED IN
HIS BEDROOM.



**66** \ \ \ \ \ ou don't f\*ckin' skate, take off that box logo"; Tyler The Creator speaks out in a rebellion against the commercialisation of underground skateboard culture in his collaboration AssMilk with brother and fellow OFWGKTA member, Earl Sweatshirt. This gnarly Supreme-wearing hip-hop collective from Los Angeles, known as Odd Future, Wolf Gang and their full name, Odd Future Wolf Gang Kill Them All, consist of a group of ten members between the ages of 17-23; including rappers Hodgy Beats, Domo Genesis, Mike G, Earl Sweatshirt, Tyler, The Creator, producers Left Brain, The Super 3 and Syd tha Kyd, skateboarder Jasper Dolphin, filmmaker Taco Bennett and singer Frank Ocean. It's a motley bunch.

As of 11th February this year, everything changed for the fresh hip-hop makers after leader of OF-WGKTA; Tyler released his alluringly psychopathic video, *Yonkers*. The video has received a widespread amount of interest, reaching over two million hits on *YouTube* and being labelled 'the video of 2011' by Kanye West (on his *Twitter* page). Since the release, Tyler has signed an album deal with UK label XL Recordings, where which Dizzee

Rascal, Basement Jaxx and Adele are signed. He has also made his first TV appearance alongside Hodgy Beats, performing the song Sandwitches on the popular American chat show, Late Night With Jimmy Fallon. Their threatening stage presence gripped the audience, thumping through each lyric under inverted, cross-laden balaclavas, followed by almost demolishing the set and taunting the guests. It was all in good spirits though.

The single Yonkers, from Tyler's second upcoming album, Goblin, will be released this April. Tyler's compelling charisma holds your attention as the classic raw hip-hop beat drops and he lures you into the lyric, 'I'm a f\*ckin' walkin' paradox, no I'm not'. This line couldn't encapsulate the song any better, with contradictory references resounding throughout. The lyrics are brutal, satanic and violent, and Tyler described OFWGKTA's sound perfectly in a recent interview; 'It sounds like if Hitler buttf\*cked Dr Seuss, and went to a jazz concert and had a moshpit and stabbed a f\*cking baby'. Yeah, that's what it sounds like...

Reminiscent of the Wu Tang Clan with elements of Ol' Dirty Bastard, the grittiness of the black and white video

brings home grown hip-hop back to life, the originality and gruesomeness of the lyrics taking the music genre to a different level. It may be horrifying, offensive and aggressively controversial, but it's got the whole world's attention, right? Probably the best thing Odd Future have produced to date, *Yonkers*, epitomises pretty much everything they're about, from the collective's commanding energy and ominous ideologies to their style.

The Supreme worshipping clan fly the flag of the exclusive skate brand, parading their box logo hats, t-shirts and hoodies, which have become their trademark. They defend the cult they follow yet attack commercialisation, with one of the most striking lyrics in *Yonkers* being, 'I'll crash that f\*ckin' plane at that faggot n\*gga B.O.B is in and stab Bruno Mars in his Goddamn oesophagus'.

Tyler's skateboarding attire contradicts the sheer violence of his lyrics, but is he f\*cking around? I can't really tell. Even if he isn't, he's obviously thought about this stuff. 'I just don't give a f\*ck, the only time I do is when a b\*tch is screaming, Tyler, stop'. Lovely. Watch the OFWGKTA monsters take over the world.





killed me (all over again), and holding onto the one thing which keeps me going, my music, almost became impossible. So I feel I am very very lucky, very lucky that people believe in me and have stuck with me; my management, label, guitarist, family and friends, these are the people, alongside the music, that have kept going.

**FTF**: How is the second album coming along?

**KF**: Yeesss... the second record; it's what I have been waiting for from the moment I began to feel well enough to work again. I am working on it with a producer called Flood (Nick Cave, NIN) and I start on the 3rd/4th Feb, then we are doing a live version (with audience) on the 10th Feb in London. It's very early days but it's all very exciting.

**FTF**: In 2009 you managed to play a tiny Cornish café, Jools Holland, as well as the Royal Albert Hall, did the pace of things get a bit much at times?

**KF**: The pace was perfect, honestly it feels more alien to me to stop. I can't understand theses people that want a break; I can't wait to start again.

FTF: 'Singer/songwriters'

unfortunately often get generalised by the press, did you ever feel like you had to really prove your worth against the competition?

**KF**: No, it was never like that at the time. It has felt like that recently though, since I have been away, but I was always myself, and still will be, so hopefully people will accept that.

**FTF**: Many have said that the true beauty of songs is to be able to simply tell a story, would you agree?

**KF**: Definitely, I try to write simple songs that express how I feel at any given moment but it really can be the hardest thing in the world to do. If people can relate to the story I am trying to tell then I feel content.

**FTF**: Track The Author is a fan favorite and itself a great narrative song, how hard was it to write?

**KF**: You know what I don't want to jinx myself but that one was one of the quickest song I have ever written. I wrote it over the wash bowl in my kitchen in my student halls.

**FTF**: What's your biggest hope for 2011?

**KF**: Honestly... to be let back



The money munching themes apparent in standout track *Every Coin* (the video is worth a watch as well) makes a good introduction to Spring Offensive. At first listen they come across as quite simply tight and well-practised guitar band, but dig a little deeper and you get yourself a set of songs with original imagery and some inventive time changes; "I swear they've poisoned my meals" from *Abacus Rex* proves a bizarrely chantworthy lyric.

Questioned on the source of there inspiration they simply state. "Whatever has legs." Morbid legs by the sounds of it, but wait there's more; "I think there's a misconception that you write your best when you write what you know; when you have to explore a subject, that's when the most interesting music can be written. Least we hope so, because if we just wrote what we knew, we'd end up with concept albums about running out of milk and calling the landlord because the kitchen light is broken again. True story." Pulp they are not, and while Jarvis Cocker could get away with such observational wordsmithing, Spring Offensive have forged from a different mold, one that's more in keeping with The Smiths' time honored downbeat lyrics/upbeat music combo; a nice

tonal mix that ensures the songs stay lodged in your head. Hard work, as your dad would say, also helps.

In just the space of a year, Spring Offensive have released an EP, minialbum, free single and DVD. It's a work ethic that ensures a fanbase, as well as some tasty support slots with Frank Tuner and The Go! Team. Rock n' roll is a temperamental mistress though and for every blistering gig and BBC 6 interview there are some Spinal Tap moments. "We turned up to a gig in Witney last year, loaded in and sound checked only to be told that the gig had been cancelled and the venue closed because there was a gypsy funeral. Apparently they can tear a town to pieces. Seemed friendly enough to us." Such odd events have done nothing to damage the band's momentum, however, with last month seeing the arrival of a purely acoustic record entitled Between You And Me. The release Spring Offensive's sound while showcasing some impressive melodic flourishes. It's nicely haunting, rather than hippie campfire material, building guitar lines and vocals fitting today's contemporary acoustic scene, while clearly keeping their rock-led edge. The angst-drenched lyrics and delivery help bitter what could have easily become a too sweet a pill; its Damien Rice

rather the Fleet Foxes. For the recently dumped? They'll love it.

In an age where the popularity of acts such as the Arctic Monkeys and Bloc Party caused guitar music to be over-saturated with copycats, it's crucial for upcoming bands to try their hands in other avenues. An acoustic EP is a simple but novel idea harking back to MTV's *Unplugged* days; a chance for groups to prove their true worth, or alternatively make fools of themselves with tracks that just don't transfer to a more earthy approach. Spring Offensive pass with flying colours, understanding that a more mellow touch is needed when playing on more delicate instruments.

Overall they seem a relentless bunch, eager to spread their word gigging as much as possible, wherever and to whomever is willing to listen. A lot has been achieved in just a short time, and like all musicians they have ambitions; "Every band secretly harbors dreams of being the biggest band in the world, playing sold-out stadiums and raking in the yachts, but realistically our mission is just to keep going for as long as we can, as long as people keep listening." With a little luck and a continued level of commitment Spring Offensive's brand of thought provoking rock should take them far.

orming back in 2005, Yelle are the latest in a long line of super-cool French electro bands, ready and waiting to take up the slack where CSS and New Young Pony Club have fallen by the wayside

The summation of Yelle (Julie Budet), GrandMarnier (Jean-François Perrier) and Tepr (Tanguy Destable), the former handling lyrical duties, and the latter two working on the music and production, perhaps despite their tracks being sung exclusively in French, Yelle have already enjoyed success overseas, but are now really ready to hit the airwaves.

Debut *Pop-Up* showed promise, if running a little samey, but on sophomore *Safari Disco Club*, they bring a lot more depth and variation, voyaging into tribal beats to reap truly fearsome rewards.

As songs and snippets have leaked out, behind the scenes if not in the public eye, it's no surprise they're getting noticed. In fact, after putting *Pop-Up* together fairly quickly, the two years they had off since 2008 were spent almost exclusively penning new material. In GrandMarnier, and Tepr (whose remixes are quickly making a name for himself on his own), Yelle has found two masters of electro, while she's similarly stepped it up on a lyrical

standpoint. And when brought together, they're a perfect match.

Tracks like *La Musique* and *Mon Pays* blend ice cool electro with warmer drums, while the sultry vocals feel fresh yet still yearning of an again invogue 80s sound. A brilliant video plus the styling for their new release cover art prove they have the visual creativity to back it up too.

Off the back of *Pop-Up* Yelle toured fairly extensively in 2008, but 2011 is really going to be the year that makes them. Opening for Katy Perry on the UK leg of her huge *California Dreams* tour, and with worldwide dates in the pipeline, Yelle's triple threat is really turning heads.





# MIDDLE BROTHER MIDDLE BROTHER

### **RELEASED OUT NOW**

Surprising fans with a secret show at last year's SXSW, Middle Brother, then known as MG&V, is a supergroup formed of John McCauley (Deer Tick), Taylor Goldsmith (Dawes) and Matt Vasquez (Delta Spirit). If you've heard of one of the above, then odds are you'll have also heard of another, maybe even the full set, so when the trio announced they were stepped it up and releasing an album come 2011, to put it lightly, anticipation was high.

Their self-titled debut is split pretty much 50/50 when it comes to pace; and nicely ordered fast, slow, fast, slow without ever feeling disjointed. Sharing vocal duties, each gives their own individual touch, while collectively their brand of folk-rock feels timeless and ever enthusiastic. Though their talents were never doubted, for McCauley, Goldsmith and Vasquez to craft such a well-rounded debut after formed barely a year ago is a remarkable achievement. **SB** 





# RIVAL SCHOOLS PEDALS

### RFI FASED OUT NOW

The legendary post-hardcore band make a triumphant return with their first release since the magnificent *United By Fate* over ten years ago. *Pedals* continues wearing the punchy, hook-laden crown that Rival Schools are still so unrivaled for.

Highlights are aplenty, with opener Writing It Out exploding with trebly bass and spiky guitars, and Big Waves a gloriously melodic and carefree tune. Eyes Wide Open is ridiculously tight, with Sam Seigler's pounding drumming and Ian Love's fuzzy guitar tone igniting the album as a whole.

While extremely solid and consistent, *Pedals* is left crying out for three or four more tracks as listens simply fly by, though that's no real fault of the songwriting talent the band possesses. Rival Schools start a European tour at the end of spring, and the tracks from *Pedals* will easily sit alongside the group's magnificent back catalogue. **TM** 





# PANIC! AT THE DISCO VICES AND VIRTUES

### **RELEASED MARCH 21**

After their highly theatrical dance-punk debut, A Fever You Can't Sweat Out, Panic! At The Disco took a difference direction on sophomore Pretty. Odd. A folky, and more eclectic album, it was fairly obvious creative forces were pulling in different directions. Lead songwriter Ryan Ross and bassist Jon Walker left, but determined to carry on, the remaining twosome, Brendon Urie and Spencer Smith, now return with Vices And Virtues, an LP that feels much more like the natural follow-up to their initial breakthrough.

Taking their sound back to peak grandiosity, there are references to *Pretty. Odd* but *Vices And Virtues* concentrates more on complex synths, strings and absorbing hooks, backing up Urie's commanding and energetic voice. The album is dramatical in the right ways, yet it doesn't feel over produced. *Vices And Virtues* is a nice development on *Fever*, that, one might suggest, should have happened in place of *Pretty. Odd.* **SB** 





# THE VACCINES WHAT DID YOU EXPECT FROM...?

### **RELEASED MARCH 14**

With the never-ending conveyor belt of dull, copycat indie bands coming out of London, it's surely time, on the balance of probability alone, for one of them to be half-decent, so step forward The Vaccines, the new darlings of the evergreen *NME* hype machine.

Strip away the obvious Stokes influences and concentrate of the rawer aspects of *What Did You Expect From The Vaccines?* and at times it does surprise. *A Lack of Understanding* bumps along with rugged charm and *All in White* has an immediately catchy bassline and a tremendous chorus.

It's the middle of the album where the band really runs out of ideas, however. Wetsuit is appalling and Post-Break-Up Sex sounds like an uninteresting, child-like Ramones B-side. The album will undoubtedly shift copies, but there are far better bands out there more deserving of your time, and proof again, once-taste makers NME have lost their touch. **TM** 





### THE STROKES Angles

### **RELEASED MARCH 21**

A full five years since their last release, *First Impressions Of Earth*, back in 2006, many doubted whether a fourth studio album would ever materialise from the reinvigorators of indie rock, The Strokes. After much talked-up problems getting the quintet together, infighting and side-projects galore, at last they've settled down and finished up on a new record.

Harking back to the plucky guitar sound of their first two albums rather than the brasher third offering, Angles is their most eclectic offering to date, backing up the expected snappy hooks with more hazy synth touches alongside Casablancas' usual drawling, lazy vocals. Single *Under Cover Of Darkness* is an apt lead-in but this album offers so much more. The Strokes have gone a little new wave, though aside from *Two Kinds Of Happiness*, the purists will still find a lot to love in *Gratisfaction* and wonderful closer, *Life Is Simple In The Moonlight*. It's good to have them back. **SB** 



### NATHANIEL RATELIFF In Memory of Loss

### **RELEASED OUT NOW**

In Memory of Loss is the debut album from Coloradobased songwriter, Nathaniel Rateliff. Despite being blessed with a rich, deep voice and remarkable voice, however, Rateliff's debut is something of a mixed bag.

The 16-track album has obviously been lovingly presided over, with sparse, mainly acoustic arrangements that occasionally feature the piano or cello. Upon initial listens though, it merely meanders along and fails to ever captivate. *Shroud* is a perfect example;, while its folk-drenched, melancholic nature is quite soothing, it never truly urges you to go back and listen again, so you probably won't. This is the underlying problem in an album that promises much but rarely graces the heights of which Rateliff is potentially capable, especially given his remarkable live performances. Furthermore, latter parts of the album verge towards 'dub-country' and feel out of place next to the hushed, poignant tracks that Rateliff generally excels at. **TM** 





# THE NAKED AND FAMOUS PASSIVE ME, AGGRESSIVE YOU

### **RELEASED MARCH 14**

One of the most hyped bands talked up to break in 2011, The Naked And Famous are this year's "oh, that track is by them" band, with their music already filling commercials and TV shows galore, after a strong second half to 2010 in their native New Zealand.

Breaking out from Down Under, *Passive Me, Aggressive You* has got the instant wow factor to make a big impression, but is sorely undone by a complete lack of lasting appeal.

If you've heard The Naked And Famous before, it'll likely be *Punching In A Dream* or *Young Blood*, but while those spikey electro offerings are the five piece's best work, the rest of *Passive Me*, *Aggressive You* is often mellow affair, and on whole draws comparisons to MGMT. This debut, however, feels much too samey, with only a bare minimum of variation and expanse throughout, which is a pity, because they've obviously got a lot of talent somewhere, deep inside. *SB* 





### WILD PALMS Until Spring

### **RELEASED OUT NOW**

While Wild Palms cite influences including Capt. Beefheart, Wire and The Fall, you can't help but pigeonhole their sound to the goth stalwarts of the '80s; Echo And The Bunnymen and The Cure. Their debut album, released on One Little Indian, chugs along following a tired, formulaic formula, which has been heard from these sorts of bands countless times.

While singer Lou Hill's songwriting is on the whole sincere and forthright, his continued name checking of famous literary figures like Woolf and Nabokov, quickly grates. Unfortunately, while the band is more than capable of crafting some tight backing music, it does little to lift them above the other unremarkable peers they share a platform with. *Until Spring* isn't bad, it just never ventures beyond the comfort zone of languid, ordinary ideas. This is an inoffensive listen, but if you're looking to be pushing boundaries, you won't get that here. *TM* 











DVD & BLU-RAY REVIEWS

## YOUR HIGHNESS

### RELEASED APRIL 8 (USA) APRIL 13 (UK)

In Your Highness, Danny McBride stars as Thadeous, an arrogant prince who, along with his brother Fabious (James Franco), must endure an epic quest to save their father's kingdom. It's a fantasy-comedy apparently in the vein of *The Princess Bride*, though whether this newly assembled project can match the wit and delights of that earlier picture remains to be seen.

McBride clearly has faith in Your Highness - he co-wrote and co-exec. produced it - and there must be something good about the script as a pretty impressive cast has been assembled. Alongside McBride himself and James Franco (ever more prolific), Natalie Portman (also prolific at present, and now with an Oscar to her name) shows up as a warrior princess, while the supporting castlist includes the likes of Michael Clarke Duncan, Zooey Deschanel, Toby Jones, Damien Lewis and Justin Theroux.

It is directed by David Gordon Green, who directed Franco and McBride in the stoner comedy *Pineapple Express*, which received a warm reception, but will it be any good? The trailer shows moments of promise but in general doesn't inspire a huge amount of confidence. While this is obviously inspired by The Princess Bride, it is that film's qualities that may put pay to the impact this will make. It's sure to be helped by its stars - in particular Portman and Franco - but whether it will match any box office success with comic success we'll have to wait and see.







### **PROMETHEUS**

### **RELEASED JUNE 8, 2012**

This is an interesting one. It's been long in gestation and, somewhat like the aliens in Ridley Scott's *Alien*, has gone through a few different evolutions before reaching its final, hopefully killer, incarnation. Initially touted as a direct prequel to *Alien*, and then as a two-part prequel, Prometheus has, according to Scott in a now widely repeated quote, developed its own "grand mythology and universe."

So is it a prequel to *Alien* or not? Well, yes and no, but Michael Fassbender, one of the new cast members,

has claimed that there are definitely connections. H.R. Giger (the genius behind the original alien designs) also seems to be involved, either as a consultant/advisor or in a more direct way, so the creature designs will likely be his. Great news indeed.

The cast, too, is shaping up rather nicely. Fassbender, as we've already mentioned, will be joined in space by Noomi Rapace (*The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*) and possibly Michelle Yeoh and Charlize Theron too. And with that, the project has shifted in

my estimation from potential disaster to potential success. Scott has spoken about *Prometheus* with passion, and we've seen in the past that when he puts his mind to it, he can put out great sci-fi (*Alien*, *Blade Runner*). We can only hope that it doesn't turn out like those dreadful *Aliens Vs. Predator* movies, and that the 3-D shoot doesn't hamper the tense atmospherics many will be expecting. It's reportedly going to be rated R, hopefully an indicator that there won't be any studio 'dumbing down' to attract a larger audience.

### LARRY CROWNE

### RELEASED JUNE I (USA) TBC (UK)

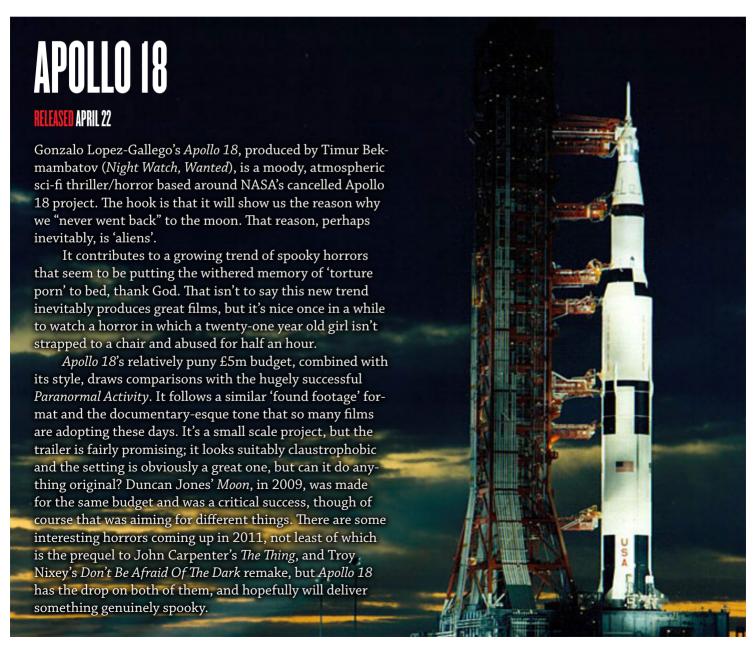
Tom Hanks, in recent years, hasn't been the prolific star that we're used to. In the '90s and early 2000s you couldn't look to your left without seeing his face on a poster, but these days he seems to have slowed, if, of course, we forget about his lead role in those two Dan Brown adaptations, which most of us are trying to do anyway. In 2010 he leant his voice to Pixar's Woody for the third time, but since 2007/8 hasn't been too busy.

With *Larry Crowne*, Hanks is making a multi-faceted comeback. He

not only co-wrote and co-produced the project, but he's also starring and directing. This story of a middle-aged man – the titular Larry (Hanks) – who is made redundant and decides to go back to college, will hopefully serve as a return to form for one of the best-loved actors of his generation.

Back at college he falls for Julia Roberts' professor, Mercedes, and forms bonds with his fellow students. A setup that while admittedly not hugely original, should lead to some perceptive inter-generational humour. Larry Crowne also features Pam Grier (Jackie Brown) in the supporting cast, we can't be a bad thing.

Hanks has taken it upon himself (by writing and directing) to put together a more exciting project than his outings as Robert Langdon, and fingers crossed that, with *Larry Crowne*, he'll find some success. The last time he collaborated with Roberts was on the well-received *Charlie Wilson's War*, and she too will be hoping for a return to form after a largely disappointing output of late.









WORDS SAM WALKER-SMART

aruki Murakami is arguably Japan's most successful and famous author in the West, with millions worldwide reading his surreal and thoughtful tales of life, sex, and cats. Key are his works' ability to balance being effortlessly cool while still remaining profound and meaningful. In short, the ideal texts for those teenagers blossoming into adulthood, or alternatively fully-fledged grownups tearfully looking back at their own misspent youth. Norwegian Wood, Murakami's most successful novel (and a full-blown phenomenon in Japan), is no different. Part-coming-of-age drama, part-introspective and existentialistic study, the book, and now film, describe the trails and tribulations of one Toru Watanabe during his time studying in Tokyo in the late '60s. No overly nostalgic impressions of the student riots and counter culture movements are present, the story instead focuses on one man's journey into adulthood and the nature of love, both romantic and those reserved for friendship alone. It is, essentially, an intellectual look at life's angst, and who better to score sophisticated teenage angst than a member of Radiohead? With the sleek cityscapes of Tokyo and the quiet enchanting Japanese mountains and countryside acting as the novel's backdrop guitarist Jonny Greenwood has been giving the perfect location for his own brand of stirring melancholy. Madness, isolation and death are just some of the themes peppering the piece and with Murakami's trademark wit and musical references making an appearance, the film is ensured to be an accessible means within which to experience his latest composition for film.

While anticipation for last month's Radiohead album The King Of Limbs reached fever pitch, for many the Norwegian Wood is held on similar baited breath. It offers a chance to see a star not working outside of his comfort zone, but refreshingly well within it. Now heavily utilising popular and classical music in both his day jobs Johnny Greenwood has, like Damon Albarn and others before him.

carved himself an ever credible and creative means where he can outpour his talent. Cutting his teeth on 2003's experimental Bodysong, a film devoid of dialogue, Greenwood was forced to speak for the images within, using

various textures and tones to add extra emotional strength to director Simon Pummell's exploration of life, death and dance. Scoring a more traditional and anticipated picture, however, can bring difficulties and the great potential for bad publicity, given the ever-present unrealistic expec-

tations of fans and film lovers alike. It's with this in mind that Paul Thomas Anderson's 2007 Oscar-winning There Will Be Blood stands as such an intriguing piece of contemporary work. Highly anticipated by cinema fanatics and music buffs alike - the Magnolia director meeting OK Computer fret botherer - Greenwood did not disappoint with his often-eerie score keeping everyone happy, delivering ambiance by the bucket load. Losing out on a near guaranteed Oscar nomination due to a technicality (some tracks being used previously elsewhere), There Will Be Blood still accomplished many things, mainly leaving audiences eager to see what the boy from Oxford would do next.

Luckily for us what came next was a new album and film score released within a month of each other; a home run some might say. Still, despite Greenwood's involvement in such a well-loved story the adaptation would nothing in less placed in trust worthy hands. The hands of Anh Hung Tran could be considered so, a frontrunner of Vietnamese cinema for the past two decades, helping garner his country's cinema plenty of international attention. His debut picture, 1993's The Scent Of Green Papaya, received two

Cannes awards as well as an Oscar nomination for Best Foreign Film, an achievement that made him a real 'one to watch' in the early nineties' floodgate of new filmmaking talent. Followup Cyclo was as warmly received and

> featured Radiohead's early classic Creep, signalling the director's future use of one of its members.

After a recent failed attempt at the thrillerdrama with Josh Hartnett vehicle I Come With The Rain, the film community happily awaits Tran's return to more brooding and in-

telligent waters. Word from across the

pond is promising while contradictory; from early reviews it is clear that the piece is heavenly shot and sticks to the novel religiously, with all major players and scenes apparent in its 133-minute runtime. However, by being so faithful, a rare commodity in filmic adaptations, it suffers from isolating a proportion of the audience. One quick look at the synopsis describes a film that is going to be lacking in classic high-octane thrills, relying rather on subtle gestures and memorable landscapes. The kind of person queuing up Norwegian Wood, however, should take this easily in their strike, as a fan of the book or cinephile interested in what the rest of the world has to offer. In the words of the author himself; "if you only read the books that everyone else is reading, you can only think what everyone else is thinking."

One thing is for sure, the film of Norwegian Wood, much like the book, will be vastly different to anything else out that week. Tragic, funny and most of all memorable, it's a bitter-sweet portrait of youth and memory, a postcard to times gone by, exploring how they affected the person that stands here today.

Norwegian Wood is out March 11th

interview with

# Alma Har'el & Joe Lindquist

director and editor of *Bombay Beach* words by Nick Deigman

lma Har'el is one of the most interesting freshman filmmakers of this year's Berlinale (the Berlin International Film Festival). Her exciting debut, Bombay Beach, tells the story of a forgotten community of misfits and youngsters living on the east shore of the Salton Sea, deep in the California desert. The most immediately striking thing about this leonine filmmaker, hailing from Israel but based in Los Angeles, is her exclamation mark plume of tousled fiery hair. But as this feature documentary suggests, there are more vivid colours and jolts of energy lurking within. We had the good fortune to spend a chilly Berlin evening discussing the film with Har'el, along with her editor, Joe Lindquist.

**FAN THE FIRE**: So you shot the film entirely on your own?

ALMA HAR'EL: That's right, I shot it on a Canon Vixia HD. It's just a consumer camera, you can buy it for like \$600 at Best Buy. I was alone out there, with the headphones on and the boom in one hand, holding the camera up to my face the whole time because it didn't have a viewfinder and it was impossible to see the LCD screen in the sunlight. And it was 45°C out there! So it was sort of crazy; but it was so much fun hanging out with them for four months; it was like a second childhood. They are all so interesting, and they just became my friends. I still go to visit them every few weeks.

**FTF**: It is clear from watching the film that you were really looking for the human aspect: telling the story of people you know, and not pretending not to know them?

AH: Well this was my first film, and I didn't really have any interest in looking for the 'drama' as many documentary directors might. Like when Red had his stroke, some people might have thought, "Great! He's in the hospital!" but that really wasn't my state of mind. I mean there is a lot more stuff that I could have put in the film – there are paedophiles and meth addicts and hookers – but I didn't think it was necessary or relevant to

what I was doing. When we were editing we slowly noticed that there were just certain things we weren't going to include. It became clearer and clearer what our stories were. While we were editing we brought in people to give us notes, and one quite famous editor said, "What are you? A filmmaker or a social worker?" I thought, "Well I don't think I'm either of those things."

FTF: Was it a conscious decision to concentrate on the courage and strength of the community, and ignore the failure of outsiders to help them? AH: You know, I don't think it is as easy as it looks. It's not as if there is someone that was supposed to be helping them. When I first came to America I thought everybody only cared about money; but the US actually has more philanthropy than anywhere else, so there are tons of organisations in the area that try to help educate, and give food, and do all sorts of things. Of course there are things that aren't justified, and capitalism and greed do exist. I mean this area has just been completely forgotten, and they have been left there, and somebody should take care of it of course; but it's just not what this film was about. What matters is how these people that I care about deal with their lives. And I think they are very heroic the way they go about it, and the dignity that they manage to find in their situation, and the love that they have, it is really beautiful.

FTF: You do make a more overt statement on one specific social issue in the US: the pharmaceutical industry. AH: Well I am not against pharmaceuticals at all, in fact I am on pharmaceuticals; but I think that the problem, as with most things, is how people use them. In America, things gets out of control and lose perspective. When I arrived there I was shocked and wanted to find out how it was possible for a child as young as Benny to be given so much lithium! There is so little research, and no one even knows if these drugs will help such a young mind because it is still developing. It

is really tragic, but I tell myself that Benny's spirit is so strong, and his imagination is so strong, I have faith that he is going to be stronger than the medication. I think it is sad because now, in America, one in every four children is medicated, and the children that are most medicated are actually in poor areas, and they don't even get therapy with it.

**FTF**: One of the most noticeable things about the film are the magical dance sequences that you created with the people in the community. Did you already have that idea before you started? Or was that something you thought of while you were there? **AH**: I had an idea in my mind to do a film like that for about a year, but I just couldn't find the right context. Then when I got to Bombay Beach I thought that these people could really get something out of it... and they might just be bored enough to agree! And also I knew that the location itself could pull it off. I believe that, in life in general, when contrasting feelings are embraced they can create beauty. So sadness and happiness, and loneliness and celebration; they can come together to create a more rounded feeling of what life is like. And I felt it so strongly when I got to Bombay Beach: it is surrounded by dead things but also bursting with life, with all these children running around with the dead fish. It is all together there, so I just wanted to try to take it all in, that was my journey.

**FTF**: Can you both talk a bit about the process of discovering this fairly personal and pioneering style of documentary storytelling?

AH: There were a lot of people that wanted to edit this, and some of them had a lot more experience than Joe, but there was something about Joe where we both felt we were going to discover this thing together. When we had a rough cut we brought more experienced people in to give us notes, and everyone said they thought it was beautiful but they weren't sure that it was working because they had never

seen anything like it before. It was definitely a difficult process working out what we liked, and then holding onto it when we got told it wasn't working. JOE LINDQUIST: Yeah, after that visit we were all sort of down because we had been trying to make a point of not using any standard conventions, but people didn't really get it. One of the first things I saw that Alma had put together was a rough assembly of the kids in the kitchen making fun of Benny, followed by "the Benny dance". The essence of what it became in the film was all intact at that early stage, and for me that was the moment I knew I wanted to be a part of this, because of how unique it was. The dances are a reflection of what has just happened, they are birthed from the actual story, so I knew that if we could do that throughout the whole movie, which was Alma's intuition, for me that was incredible.

How did that come about? **AH**: Werner's wife, Lene Herzog, is a beautiful photographer and a good friend of mine, and I showed them the film when it was finished. He gave me the funniest notes! They were mainly technical notes about the sound; but he loved the film and thought it was perfect the way it was. The people that came into the screenings would always say, "but what is this film about? Just put it in a logline." But when I showed

it to Werner he was the first person

that just said, "Its about the American

Dream, the broken American Dream."

And of course he was right.

**FTF**: One of the people listed in the 'Thanks to' credits is Werner Herzog.

FTF: Did you already had a relationship with Zach Condon [of the band Beirut] before you began the project? What was his involvement? AH: That's one of the best relationships I have. He is just a beautiful, inspiring, artistic person, and a very

good friend. I am a huge fan of his on every level, and I have learnt a lot from him. So we did it like this: first I listened to all the albums, and I chose all the songs that I thought could

I was alone out
there, [...] holding
the camera up to my
face the whole time
because it didn't have
a viewfinder and it
was impossible to see
the LCD screen in the
sunlight."

maybe work, which was probably about fifteen or twenty songs. And then he sent me a hard drive with all the songs that I had picked in separated tracks (so each instrument in splits) and said, "Do whatever you want with it". That was such a trusting thing to do and we were so thankful. So when we had a rough cut I went to New Mexico for a week and stayed with Zach. He has a studio there so everyday we would go and work on a scene and he would just write stuff and record it on the spot. And we went to his parent's house in Santa Fe with microphones and recorded stuff on this organ that he used to play as a kid.

**FTF**: Do you think your unusual decision to incorporate music video and magical realist elements into the film could attract a slightly different audience of music video fans?

**AH**: Yeah, perhaps. There is such a problem with music videos and with the industry in general. I loved doing them, but at a certain point I realised

there is less and less room for them. I hear things are actually improving again now, but I took a break from that and realised I needed to find a new way to incorporate music videos into my work without needing to do it for a label. Because it is still a legitimate language.

**FTF**: You finished the film two days before arriving in Berlin. What are your plans after this?

AH: Well we have already been invited to 20 more festivals after our Berlin screenings, and hopefully more will come along. So I think we will just go around and show it at film festivals and see if people like it. It's not going to be easy; it's not going to be a film that people jump on because they can't see how they would make money off it right away. But if people write about it and talk about it and get interested in it, then maybe it will make it to the cinema.

Bombay Beach screened in the Panorama section of the 2011 Berlinale



If you go down to Waltham Forest today, You'll be sure of a big surprise,

If you go down to Walthamstow, You better know all the lies

For every man and women there was,
Will gather there for certain because,
Today's the day we're saving something iconic.

WORDS JAMES WRIGHT

Seven years ago, residents of Waltham Forest fought and won the fight to save the EMD cinema from being converted into yet another church. This historic building started life in 1887 as a venue for dances, concerts, meetings and plays before 1896 when it played host to one of London's first ever film shows. Not only this, but the flamboyant venue played host to musical legends such as The Beatles, The Rolling Stones and The Who, all before being remodeled as a three-screen cinema in 1973.

This wonderfully constructed building once stood out as a beacon of spectacle and live entertainment in the area, but today it remains an unused shell in a permanent state of decay. Remarkably this was once a thriving area that could claim to have up to over six cinemas in Waltham Forest. Fast-forward to today and you'll find that the grade-two listed EMD cinema building is the last remaining. Ironic, given that this is the same borough in which Britain's most iconic filmmaker was born; the legendary Sir Alfred Hitchcock.

However, in this town exceptionally rare cultural heritage has been seldom valued and as one local resident remarked; "Waltham Forest is known around the world as the birthplace of Alfred Hitchcock, but it is also now known for its local council, who bulldozed Hitchcock's childhood home to make way for a petrol garage."

To this day the EMD remains a derelict rotting eyesore and a permanent stain on Walthamstow town centre; But more than that, the venue is also a constant reminder of the once great cinematic movement that once flourished in this country before the homogenised multiplexes took over. As many will know, the EMD is of course not the first old-style cinema buildings to have succumbed to such a unfortunate fate, far from it. Cinemas all over the country which were once iconic masterpieces in their own right, have been systematically sold off as part of a country-wide disposal of older venues; In particular from the megalith Odeon cinema group.

Proof of this can be found up and down the country and although the glowing lights may be gone, the buildings still remain, only noticeably less flamboyant. The once wonderfully futuristic Odeon at Kingstanding, Birmingham, is now a dreary Mecca bingo hall. The geometrical lines of Aztec and Mayan art used for the venue of Brighton, East Sussex, is now a stripped back block of offices. While the cubist inspired cinema of Burnley has been altered into a nauseatingly dull office supplies store.

The drab transformation would have no doubt shocked the founder of the Odeon chain, Oscar Deutsch, who passionately believed in bringing glitz and entertainment to the masses. So unswerving was Deutsch's belief, that even the Odeon brand-name was coined from the acronym 'Oscar Deutsch Entertains Our Nation'. This fanatic belief led to some 258 Odeons opening across Britain in the ten short years between founding the chain and Deutsch's death in 1941, but today, as part of a joint venture with UCI, there are fewer than 104 cinemas in total. And many of these are of the characterless multiplex variety, which bring about as much magic and entertainment to the screen as a damp sparkler.

The EMD, was of no exception to this clearance and just another casualty as part of Odeon garage sale. However when it was sold on, it came with a restrictive clause preventing the new owners from screening English language films, a limitation that not only signaled the end of local cinemagoing for many of the borough's residents, but also the death knell for the building itself.

Since then, numerous legal battles have been fought and won to prevent this once great cinema from slipping into obscurity at the hands of the church group. But all the while, the building has descended into an inexcusable dilapidated condition with evidence in the last month of long-term water damage to the building so dire that part of the main auditorium was actually flooded.

Interestingly, despite the fact

that the building remains unused, the church group are still legally bound to care for its interior and exterior because of its grade-two status. Shockingly, when pushed on the matter, Pastor Paul Hill, property manager for the UCKG, defended the church because, "you cannot start spending huge amounts of money in the cosmetic of the building when you are not allowed to use the building. It doesn't make commercial sense."

The position held by the church has angered many, but none more so than Bill Hodgson who runs the McGuffin Film Society – a local group campaigning for the protection and restoration of the building. "Our campaign has always been pro-cinema and not anti-religion in any way, but the UCKG has nonetheless succeeded in completely alienating local opinion on this issue.

"If they had chosen almost any other building in the area to establish their church I'm sure they would have encountered no opposition whatsoever. By their own admission, the church has now received more than a dozen offers from people wanting to buy the building but they refuse to sell. There are numerous other sites which would be suitable for their purposes and there is precisely no need for them to cling on to this building and deprive the community of one of its most prized assets.

"Potentially the council could offer the UCKG an alternative site in exchange for the cinema which could then be transferred to a responsible owner. Most importantly, the council has the power to refuse permission for this venue to be converted into a church and to stop this nonsensical scheme in its tracks. All we can ask for is that people sign our online e-petition to demonstrate the ongoing public support for the cinema's revival."

With so few of our classic cinema buildings still in operation or even left standing, we whole-heartedly hope that the EMD is restored once again to its former glory. And if you want to show your support, please sign the petition online.

interview with

# Joanna Hogg

director of *Archipelago* words by Andrew Simpson

oanna Hogg is a name we are likely to hear mentioned a lot over the next few years. The fifty year-old director's first film, Unrelated, told the story of an upper-middle-class family and their friends holidaying in Italy. Its arrival to huge acclaim in 2007 announced the emergence of a serious new talent, one with a maturity and control perhaps helped by having directed for television for twenty years. Hogg now returns to the territory of *Unrelated* with her second film, this time taking a bourgeois family off to the Isles of Scilly. Archipelago examines the emotional inarticulacy of a particular social strata, and it's a cool, unsparing look at people unable to express how they really feel. It confirms Hogg's status as one of the most distinctive, socially aware directors to have emerged from the UK in recent years, and one focused on the most British of foibles.

Hogg, for her part, sees Archipelago as the second step in the development of her particular brand of filmmaking. "It led quite naturally," she says, sitting in the bar of the Mayfair Hotel ahead of the film's UK premiere. "I definitely see it as part of a body of work that I'm in the process of creating, but I see the two films as being tonally completely different. What I was interested in with Archipelago was to create a story that was very much within a family, where as *Unrelated* was more about being outside a family. They are opposites of each other, yet at the same time they complement each other."

This question of a coherent body of work is something that Hogg has obviously contemplated at length, and she has a strong sense of the themes she is exploring. "I think for me that sort of miscommunication is at the heart of it," she explains, describing the setup in *Archipelago*. It places a mother and her two grown children in a holiday home on the Isles of Scilly, waiting for the family patriarch to arrive, and with only a live-in cook and the mother's painting teacher for company. The father is, to say the least, conspicuous by his absence.

# "I wanted a sort of dolls house effect. Tom Hiddleston is so big, and that house seems so small."

"Something about that creates the miscommunication", Hogg continues. "It's like his absence really enables the family to have difficulties with their relationships. There's something about those sorts of people that have difficulty expressing what they really feel." Indeed, the film is essentially about how families, deprived of the structure of day to day life, have no idea of how to talk to each other.

Nowhere is this more acute than in the relationship between the two siblings, Edward and Cynthia. Edward, played by *Unrelated*'s Tom Hiddleston, is a city boy who has quit his job to go and find himself in Africa. Cynthia, played by Lydia Leonard, is depressive yet self-possessed, and is constantly frustrated with Edward's choices. Both characters, Hogg explains, are expressing similar pain. "These two characters seem so different, yet they are essentially struggling with the same thing," she says. "They are different sides of each other in a way, and Edward seems to be the weaker of the two. The more he is unable to express himself, the more Cynthia wants to scream at him. I am interested in people who cannot communicate, but are essentially very similar to each other."

Both in fact, are struggling to hold on to a sense of who they are,

with Cynthia grasping at propriety and Edward looking for answers in adventure. When he tries to sell his latest idea to his family, you get the sense that even he doesn't believe what he is saying. It says a lot about how people choose to portray themselves, and Hogg sympathises with her characters. "I think from within a family it's sometimes very hard to be clear about who you are and what you want to do. Edward's very lost within his own family. I suspect that both characters, if you saw them interacting with their friends, would seem quite different." It seems to be something said from experience, and testifies to the statement that however self consciously artful Hogg's films may be, her portrayal of family dysfunction will ring true with a broad audience.

Archipelago is a portrait partly drawn from experience, and having now made two films on bourgeois dysfunction, one might expect Hogg to be a little scathing of her subjects. But in fact she's engaged, sympathetic, and passionate about her characters. Inarticulacy is never likely to be a problem, but she has plenty to say on the subject when discussing Archipelago's live-in chef, Rose. Her presence in the story is fascinating, because it allows Hogg to comment on the emotional



openness of people from other walks of life, as well as the sense of class guilt that afflicts Edward. "Outside the family the characters are much freer in terms of how they express themselves, and I think Rose is someone who is much more at ease with her emotions. She to some extent is dealing with something much bigger because her father has died, so she's dealing with an enormous absence, yet she's able to articulate it much better than they are." This is brilliantly expressed in a scene in which Rose tells Edward about her bereavement, only for him to have no idea of how to respond, completely undermining his previous efforts to bridge the class divide.

Another fascinating thing about Rose, and another reason why Hogg's films have gotten so much attention, is that she is played by a non-professional actor. Hogg hired professionals as members of the family unit, and non-professionals in the other roles. "There's this clear delineation between the two approaches," she says, explaining her decision. "I find the chemistry between the actor and the non-actor really fascinating, and helps to give a naturalistic feel. It fools the actor, in a good way, into thinking that its actually real." Hogg created further divisions by giving the actors more of the script. "They [the non-actors] had no idea of how the story was going to unfold, or even what the story was. All they knew was the setting and a little bit about the characters. For the actors it was much more defined because I let them in on the story, because they needed to know where they were going."

The strong, three dimensional characters on show is a testament to this method's success. But performances are not the only thing that make the film stand out, with Hogg using the strangeness of the environment to embellish her character's sense of displacement. The house, for instance, constantly features people occupying rooms that are either too small or too large for them. "I wanted a sort of dolls house effect. Tom Hiddleston is so big, and that house seems so small. He has difficulty negotiating the house, always hitting his head on the doorways. He's the biggest, yet he has the smallest room, and I think that slightly surreal juxtaposition of elements was something I was really interested in. I extended that to the landscape." The Isles of Scilly, with their combination of sub tropical gardens and bleak Scottish weather sitting side by side, only add to the feeling of strangeness surrounding the whole situation.

Hogg's unusual approach con-

"These two characters seem so different, yet they are essentially struggling with the same thing."

tinues when the camera rolls. "I'm interested in developing a scene in real time, so I don't do any rehearsal as such," she explains. "The camera is running right from the very beginning. Starting on a scene, they will develop it and compress it. I'll improve upon it and think of ways to make what I'm trying to say more concise. So gradually the takes get shorter and shorter because I'm getting rid of extraneous stuff that isn't saying what I want to say. I'll strip away and strip away until the essence is there." Equally this allows her actors to bring something to the table, and allows her to be flexible. "Some things will just come to me as I'm working. I don't always know where I'm going, and I don't like to have a prescribed plan. I work very instinctively, so from scene to scene the process varies." It's a process that creates long, awkward, but perfectly pitched scenes.

Process is a word that comes up again and again, and is obviously a subject that animates Hogg. She has obviously thought deeply about how she works, and this is illuminated best by the role of painting in Archipelago. Hogg gives her own painting teacher a part in the film, and his musings on art comment on the ebb and flow of the story.

"I'd been having painting lessons for about 7 years", she says, talking about the casting Christopher Baker. "And he makes a strong link between painting and filmmaking. I have found that painting lessons have inspired my filmmaking, and I thought the next logical step was putting him within a story."

Hogg sees this as a way to comment on her own way of making films; "I wanted to have him directly comment on his work, not just about the story, not just about the family and what is happening, but about my process and the filmmaking process. So there was sort of a meta level that I was interested in." From a filmmaker whose work comes at us on a number of levels, that should hardly be a surprise.

Achipelago is out now



## I AM NUMBER Four

DIRECTED BY D.J. CARUSO STARRING ALEX PETTYFER, Timothy Olyphant, Dianna Agron, Teresa Palmer, Callan McAuliffe. Kevin Durand & Jake Abel

#### **RELEASED OUT NOW**

Number 4 (Pettyfer) is one of nine young Loriens born with special powers to protect their home planet from the evil Mogadorians. But the planet was destroyed before 'The Nine' had time to harness their powers, so their 'protectors' smuggled them away and scattered them across the planet Earth to await the day when their powers would mature. Oh... they are also protected by a charm that means they can only be killed in numerical order. Some years later, Number 4 is enjoying life as an all-American teen on an endless 'Spring Break' loop of jet skiing and girl canoodling. But the apple cart is upset by news that Number 3 has been killed (which means Number 4 is next... because 4, in case you weren't aware, is directly after 3).

Number 4 and his protector, Henri (Olyphant), flee to a provincial town in Ohio and change their identities to buy some time. Now called John Smith, Number 4 enrols at the nearest High School where he: (a) falls in love with Sarah (Agron), a cool girl who looks like a cheerleader but is actually very quiet and mysterious and likes photography; (b) begins an ongoing school boy stag fight with Mark, the school quarterback whose pop also happens to be the local sheriff; and (c) befriends Sam, the school nerd, because John is far too special for trivial high school stereotypes.

As John falls more deeply in love with Sarah, and becomes more desperate to live the Norman Rockwell American life, his powers become stronger and stronger. The Mogadorians eventually track him down, but with the help of his new friends (it turns out the geek is actually very brave and the jock is a good guy at heart) John is finally ready to do battle with his antagonists.

This film has two lucrative built-in demographics - teenagers who read the bestselling book, and teenagers who love/want to be Alex Pettyfer or Glee bad girl Dianna Agron - and it is clear that Dreamworks and D.J. Caruso have no intention of attracting a wider audience than this. If they had challenged themselves they might have found room for some sort of originality - a twist perhaps, or a few moments of tongue-in-cheek humour. There is not one moment in this film that astounds the senses, tickles the solar plexus, or surprises our expectations. We know the nerd and the jock will come good in the heat of battle; we know the mysterious blonde girl that is searching for Number 4 will turn out

to be his saviour; and we know that he will fall deeply in love but then sacrifice his own happiness for the good of the planet. At least when Michael Bay, a producer on this project, directs a film there is something laughable about his grunting, maniacal actionmadness. This film doesn't even have the cojones to compete with Bay; it is happy to brand itself as some slightly wet 'Twilight for boys... with the girl from Glee in it".

A final note on the film's shimmering young star, Alex Pettyfer. In recent years, lovelorn teens have had little to fantasise over beyond a disfigured flock of simpering geeks (Shia LeBouf) and gangly wimps (R-Patz); but Pettyfer channels the spirit of Tom Cruise in his clean-cut, tousle-haired, bronze mannequin performance. There is little risk of this dashing youngster wasting any time on the new wave of hipster chic – moving to a mews house in Hoxton and dressing to the nines in vintage cable-knit sweaters and thickframed Ray-Bans to hide the effects of a three day ketamine binge. Barely out of his teens, Pettyfer has already escaped to the cultural void of Beverly Hills, dining with Michael Bay at Nobu, one assumes, and riding a gleaming Japanese motorbike around the Hollywood Hills to let off steam between gym sessions. Late-'80s action hero purism has lay dormant for too long, but it is gloriously resurrected in Pettyfer's homoerotic dimpled grin and desperate "smouldering" stare. ND





# ORANGES AND SUNSHINE

DIRECTED BY JIM LOACH STARRING HUGO WEAVING, Emily Watson, David Wenham, Tara Morice, Lorraine Ashbourne. Clayton Watson & Greg Stone

**RELEASED** APRIL I (UK) TBC (USA)

Oranges And Sunshine adapts the true story of Margaret Humphreys, a social worker from Nottingham who, in the 80s, brought to light a scandalous process of child deportation supported by the British government. It is also the feature length debut of Jim Loach, son of Ken.

Things begin slowly. We are introduced to Humphreys (Emily Watson) an everyday social worker who stumbles upon a remarkable and horrifying facet of recent British history. The film's story is not one that I was familiar with and I imagine the same will be true of many people, including some who lived through the period, and as such it carries with it (or did for me, at least) a certain weight of revelation.

Given that the story is true, or based on truth, it seems a little silly to try to avoid 'spoilers' but if people don't know the details, then it's better to leave them untold. Suffice it to say that Humphreys uncovers a terrible, systematic deportation of young children to Australia, children who were lured there under promises of 'oranges and sunshine' and other such niceties.

Jim Loach's directorial style is by no means a carbon copy of his father's, but it does share a similarly naturalist, no-frills sort of aesthetic which suits the material well. His presence is so subtle that even beautiful shots of Australian countryside and sea views don't seem glamourised at all.

It isn't necessarily easy to get into. At first it seems a little austere, a little muddled, and there are one or two instances of laboured scripting that get in the way somewhat, for example in early scenes where Humpreys and her husband discuss, quite clearly so we can understand, exactly what it is they're going to be doing. But luckily this doesn't last too long. It takes a little while to settle in, but when it does it finds a pleasing rhythm. Watson, too, seems to grow in confidence in her role as things move along. By the end she is fully convincing as an ordinary citizen turned whistle-blower, and she crucially carries absolutely no hint of self-satisfaction about what her efforts are beginning to achieve.

The film brightens up – both visually and, to a certain extent, ton-

ally – when Humphreys makes her way to Australia and sets up her Child Migrants Trust. It is in Australia, too, that Aussie actors David Wenham and Hugo Weaving are able to make an impression on things. Their supporting turns – as victims of the deportation scheme - are moving in different ways. Weaving is likable in his edgy role as Jack, a man who has never felt whole, and Wenham is excellent as Len, the deeply hurt man who has locked his emotions away inside. There is a beautiful moment towards the end when Len takes Margaret to visit the site of his childhood. At first his motives are unclear, but it becomes obvious after a time that he has suffered, and that, in a perverse way, he needs the outpouring of Margaret's emotions to clarify the thoughts in his own head. It's a subtle, nuanced performance that deserves credit.

As a depiction of real events, Loach's film feels sincere without eulogising over the woman behind it all. The fact that Margaret Humphreys may well be deserving of praise is another matter – the film is sensible enough not to saint her before our eyes; we can decide to do that ourselves. It has a few dips here and there, and the first act is unfortunately the weakest, but overall this is a story worth-telling, well-told. **MR** 





## THE TEMPEST

DIRECTED BY JULIE TAYMOR STARRING HELEN MIRREN, ALFRED MOLINA, RUSSELL BRAND, DJIMON HOUNSOU, Chris Cooper. Alan Cumming & David Strathairn

#### **RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) MARCH 4 (UK)**

Disguised with the magical mask of embarrassingly dire special effects and the adornments of good costume design, Julie Taymor's adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is undoubtedly a disaster. For any Shakespeare fans out there, this is probably one to sit out, with Taymor's production more akin to a low-budget *Harry Potter* film that is probably less convincing and humorous.

Arguably Shakespeare's final play, The Tempest consists of Prospero, who swaps sex to become Prospera (Helen Mirren) in the movie, being usurped by her brother Antonio (Chris Cooper) and cast off on a raft to perish with her young daughter Miranda (Felicity Jones). They survive, and find that they are stranded on a desert island with only the company of sole inhabitant and deformed beast, Caliban, (Djimon Hounsou) and androgynous sprite Ariel (Ben Whishaw) who prances about like Tinkerbell. Prospera makes them both her servants and takes revenge on Antonio by causing a tempest, which wrecks the ship he

is aboard. Everyone on deck survives, and they all reach the island, but not all together.

The moment I first thought 'uhoh' was when Ariel's (Ben Whishaw) weak and whimpering monologue was interrupted by cheesy rock music to inject some sort of dramatic effect. At this point, I wondered if the film was a joke but soon realised it was no laughing matter. For a timeless play that screams emotion, love and revenge through the Bard's everlasting words, this movie suggests that Taymor has completely missed the boat. The production detracts from the language instead of complimenting it; the weird effects and ambiance drench it with the transparent attempt to move Shakespeare into a fantastical genre more suitable for Narnia. The truth is, Shakespeare doesn't need much more than a set and a cast of good actors to make it brilliant.

With Helen Mirren starring as the gender-bending Prospera, (Shake-speare originally wrote the part for a male protagonist), the sex switch works to the same effect. Mirren is one of the occasional gleams of light throughout the movie, her experience of Shakespearean acting confidently shining through her performance as the boisterous sorceress. Although, since the patriarchal alpha-male Prospero is a bossy old sod in the play, (ordering his servants Ariel and Caliban about to no end) I was excited to

see some feministic girl-power explode from Mirren's interpretation. This was not so, and all we get is what appears to be a nagging old hag.

Russell Brand, who plays the vivacious servant Triculo, gives a surprisingly refreshing performance. Looking like he's just staggered in from filming his show *Ponderland*, it proves hard for the viewer to not confuse his interpretation of a 17th century servant with his infamous celebrity persona. Nevertheless, Brand grips onto every word and is the only one who seems to fully embrace and enjoy the Bard's poetic verses, unlike Caliban who appears to struggle with the language.

His interaction with Caliban is moderately amusing, yet as in real life, Brand excels as a performer when he is on his own. Ultimately, the idea that Russell Brand could be the highlight of a Shakespeare production is a worrying thought.

The only aspect of the movie that sincerely impressed me was the creativity and effort displayed in the costumes. Designed by Sandy Powell, the spectacular designs try their best to conceal some shaky performances, despite looking more suited to a theatre production.

The Hawaiian setting also provides some aesthetic glimmers, but cannot rectify the lack of chemistry between the actors. Shakespeare is spinning in his grave. **LB** 



## THE RITE

DIRECTED BY MIKAEL HAFSTRÖM STARRING ANTHONY Hopkins, Colin O'donoghue, Alice Braga, Ciarán Hinds. Toby Jones. Rutger Hauer & Marta Gastini

#### **RELEASED OUT NOW**

About a Christian scholar who never really believed in God, after enrolling in seminary school Michael's (O'Donoghue) plans were simple; abdicate his vows and revel is what had become a free college degree. However, when he's forced to act up on religious duties on the street, he impresses his priest, who in tern requests he takes a class on exorcism in Rome, and become a priest himself. With the offer of a levied \$100k student loan upon its completion, even if he still wants to leave the church, Michael accepts, only what's in-waiting might just be too much other-worldly proof for even the most sceptical of unbelievers.

Shadowing Father Lucas (Hopkins) as he treats a possessed pregnant 16-year-old, all doesn't go according to plan, and soon, the priest himself takes a turn for the worst. With no other option, and against all his doubts, Michael must don the cloth himself, and attempt to rid his tutor of demons he had never expected to face, never mind believe in.

While enjoyable in part, *The Rite* never feels like it even attempts to step out beyond mediocrity. While the production values are everything out of Hollywood, there's nothing in the script, acting nor direction to give the film its own identity and pulse.

Already stuttering in his English language career, this is another largely forgettable effort from Mikael Håfström, who might just have run out of shots, after similar studio films Derailed and 1408, each semi-promising, also failed to really excite. Everything in his films is handled amicably, but no passion, character or style comes through. It seems he's more of a 'hand

for hire' director, than one of thoughts and creativity, and with so many truly talented filmmakers waiting in the wings, at this rate, his days are more than numbered.

Playing the focal priest, Hopkins is solid in a clichéd role, though especially when possessed, it's more of an auto-pilot performance, and reminiscent of Hannibal lecture-lite; he's a little ridiculous, but certainly not ridiculous enough to be sublime.

Alongside the cinematic legend, lead Colin O'Donoghue is thoroughly overwhelmed, and not nearly commanding enough to drive the film forward, which when the running time comes in a whisker under two hours, leaves *The Rite* feeling bloated. While the cutting room floor did leave for a fair few creepy moments and somewhat sustained sense of fear, the film could have been put together in a much snappier way, with a hugely convoluted opening certainly not helping *The Rite*'s uneven pace. **SB** 





# THE ADJUSTMENT BUREAU

DIRECTED BY GEORGE NOLFI STARRING MATT DAMON, EMILY BLUNT, ANTHONY MACKIE, SHOHREH AGHDASHLOO, MICHAEL KELLY. JOHN SLATTERY & ANTHONY RUIVIVAR

#### **RELEASED MARCH 4**

Sci-fi is a humanistic genre. Even at its most farfetched, truly resonant science-fiction has its biggest impact when saying something about who we are. A Scanner Darkly, for instance, has its most moving moment is in its final tribute to friends lost. Similarly Blade Runner uses cyberpunk visuals as a vehicle for questioning whether people can lead meaningful, happy lives in the face of their own mortality. They are high concept, but they are also a conduit for exploring our deepest fears about ourselves, and how much control we are able to exercise over our own lives.

Like those films, *The Adjustment Bureau* is a Phillip K. Dick adaptation, and plays on similar themes. Matt Damon's career politician becomes aware of a shadowy cabal of supermen manipulating his life, and subsequently must fight their control to be with Emily Blunt's dancer. Overseen by The Chairman – essentially God – and led by *Mad Men*'s John Slattery (never be allowed to appear minus tailored suit and fedora ever again), the Bureau are out to ensure that lives run 'according to plan', and too invested in his future

to get rid of him, they instead attempt to keep Damon on course.

So far, so intriguing, and the film, directed by *Bourne* scribe George Nolfi, contains all the themes of paranoia, freedom and false selves that are the hallmarks of the best adaptations of Dick's work. These preoccupations also chime with our own times, as Damon's rise is shown via a sweeping montage of news clips and television appearances, cleverly equating a man whose fate is preordained with the way the 24-hour news cycle makes certain events look inevitable.

The Bureau's introduction, all sharp suits and all-seeing menace, chimes perfectly with an ever-mysterious New York backdrop. Their ability to use doors as portals, like when walking though a coat closet and into Yankee Stadium, is a striking visual motif. Interestingly otherworldly powers are combined with human foibles, as members are compared to caseworkers suffering emotional exhaustion, with both sides having to make choices according to plans they do not understand. It's a level of nuance not often seen in \$60m movies.

Their human foibles continue in Damon's chance reunion with Blunt – whom he was supposed to meet only once – made possible because his tail falls asleep and loses him. The Bureau's only possible recourse – apart from lobotomising someone for whom they have grand designs – is to warn him of the ramifications of going 'off-plan', thus cleverly placing free will, and not the film's villains, centre stage. This turns out to be one of the film's main strengths, as well as a major weakness.

Damon, for his part, convinces

as a man fighting for his own choices, with the pressure of the Bureau's meddling on one side nicely mirroring that of his political handlers on the other. Coming on the heels of *True* Grit, he's fast developing into one of Hollywood's finest actors, capable of bringing a real sense of inner turmoil and restlessness to the screen. Blunt, in a slighter role, is still emotionally persuasive, and the chemistry between the two leads is startlingly real. The desperate emotional heft of scenes that would seem clichéd in different hands reminds one of how rarely these pairings come off.

Unfortunately the same can't be said for *The Adjustment Bureau*'s other elements. The Bureau's powers are ultimately poorly defined, and Nolfi makes it unclear whether to take them seriously, especially in moments of awful dialogue and senseless plot points – like an inability to use their powers on water. It often seems like an urban version of *A Life Less Ordinary*, in which inept angels inconsequentially attempt to keep lovers apart by interfering with their appointment books.

What's more, a potentially thrilling, rain-soaked chase through New York is cut short, while the ending – not to mention numerous plot holes – undermines the moral dilemma supposedly driving the narrative. The fact that *The Adjustment Bureau* asks deeper questions is admirable, and it does so about an on-screen couple actually worth caring about. But in putting people centre stage and ignoring a sense of threat, the film has also forgotten what got us hooked in the first place. **AS** 





## **SUBMARINE**

DIRECTED BY RICHARD AYOADE STARRING CRAIG ROBERTS, YASMIN PAIGE, SALLY HAWKINS, NOAH TAYLOR, PADDY CONSIDINE, GEMMA CHAN & BEN STILLER

#### **RELEASED** MARCH 18 (UK) TBC (USA)

With his acting credits including the quite brilliant *The IT Crowd*, plus *The Mighty Boosh*, *Nathan Barley* and cocreating and starring in *Garth Marenghi's Darkplace*, you might have expected a wry, all-out comedy debut when Richard Ayoade turned his attention to film. Not so.

Submarine is a coming-of-age (comedy/)drama about young boy Oliver Tate (Roberts), on the eve of his 16th birthday. Tasking himself to steam full-on into manhood, he has two aims for the year; lose his virginity, and keep his parents together. It might sound like the plot of a Judd Apatow production, but set in Wales, and feeling every ounce like a British indie picture, Submarine is far from it.

Oliver is every bit as geeky and socially inept as they come, but with an off-kilter literary thirst, he's quirky enough for you to not feel sorry for him. And perhaps unsurprisingly, to spend just over 90 minutes as he attempts to woo pyromaniac Jordana (Paige) and exasperates at wacky lifecoach neighbour Graham's (Considine) apparent powers of seduction, is more than a treat.

Beautifully and carefully crafted, though the chapter titles are a little too much, elsewhere *Submarine* is 'indie' and alternative on all the right beats, and no one can argue it's not a remarkable piece of work by Richard Ayoade. It is also though, not hugely uplifting.

Never massively downbeat, *Submarine* just feels like it lacks even an ounce of positivity, in both the characters and visual tone and narrative of the filmmaking. You'll leave feeling a little glum, even though on the whole, *Submarine* tells a refreshing and uplifting story. Perhaps this was the intention, but you can't help but wonder if it would have been a more enjoyable

filmic experience, still without losing its indie morals, had Ayoade imbued more light and life into the movie.

Alex Turner (of Arctic Monkey's fame) provides a wonderful, if equally sombre soundtrack, and shares some heft of the blame for bringing the mood way, way down.

Don't be entirely put off, however, and the narration from lead Craig Roberts is perfect; his role written quite wonderfully, and accurately, as a 15-year-old on the cusp of manhood. In fact, he and fellow young actor Yasmin Paige, easily steal the show.

There are funny moments in the story, but *Submarine* really needed that bit more (read: at least one) scripted joke or amusement, and then it could have been something truly special. Even as it is, however, it's still mostly a masterpiece, I just don't have any real desire to search it out again. Moreover, it will leave you on tenterhooks as to what Richard Ayoade does next, and will serve as an almighty calling card to Hollywood, to give him a shot on something much bigger. **SB** 



## YOU WILL MEET A TALL DARK STRANGER

DIRECTED BY WOODY ALLEN STARRING NAOMI WATTS, Josh Brolin, Anthony Hopkins, Gemma Jones, Pauline Collins, Freida Pinto & Lucy Punch

#### RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) MARCH 18 (UK)

Continuing Woody Allen's remarkable output of a film a year, written and directed, you probably won't be surprised to hear *You Will Meet A Tall Dark Stranger* is another rom-com, though debuting at last year's Cannes Film Festival, perhaps it has aspirations beyond what his films of the last 10 years have become; mere numbers on

an overflowing, and indistinguishable, filmography heap.

Set in London, You Will Meet A Tall Dark Stranger follows the lives of a family – father, mother and daughter – but with the parents recently divorced, and daughter Sally's marriage on the rocks, that leaves four-way relationship turbulence, and its fair share of drama to play out.

Dad Alfie (Hopkins) has just remarried (to ex-prostitute, and big spender, Charmaine (Punch)), mum Helena (Jones) seeks solace in a psychic (Collins), Sally (Watts) dreams of making a go of it with her boss, and gallery owner, Greg (Banderas), and Sally's husband (Brolin) is left watching his writing career wash away down the drain, falling for neighbour Dia (Pinto) in the mean time.

So heavily reliant on the characters as this is, you would have expected their personalities to draw you in, at least be interesting if not charming. Unforgivably, however, none of leads will draw a second glance, meaning be-

fore they even roll into the second act, You Will Meet A Tall Dark Stranger is up against it to win you back. And spoiler alert: it doesn't.

With little care for their collective nor individual plight, it's a great struggle to remain interested in the film, and before long the narrative quickly grows boring, tinkering along while each line of dialogue frustrates. What's worse is that it even feels like the cast play their characters well, but with no spark in the script, they offer little comedy and certainly don't engage, plus the ending is unfulfilling to boot.

You Will Meet A Tall Dark Stranger has got the off-kilter quirks and tone you'd expect, and it feels thoroughly like a 'Woody Allen movie'. Sadly he certainly does feel like he's trying anything new, or to be honest, he doesn't really try anything at all. Maybe the next one will be a return to form for the living legend, and hey, at the rate Allen is churning them out, one of them has to be good, right? **SB** 





## UNKNOWN

DIRECTED BY JAUME COLLET-SERRA STARRING LIAM Neeson, Diane Kruger, January Jones, Aidan Quinn, Bruno Ganz, Frank Langella & Sebastian Koch

#### **RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) MARCH 4 (UK)**

Everyone's seen *Taken*. You know, it's that Luc Besson extravaganza in which Liam Neeson pretty much kicks, punches, stabs and maims everything standing in his way. A remarkable tour de force of blood, bruises and beat downs. It might not have been as sophisticated or challenging as many other films, but damn, it was fun.

So when you see posters, trailers and TV spots for Neeson's latest film, *Unknown*, you've got to be thinking, "hell yes", because lets face it, all the marketing paints *Unknown* essentially as *Taken* 2.

Neeson plays Dr. Martin Harris, a botanist on the way to Berlin with his wife (January Jones), to attend a conference. However, after a freak car accident, Harris awakens to discover she suddenly doesn't recognise him and that another man (Aidan Quinn) has assumed his identity. Despite his pleas he is ignored by disbelieving authorities, and all of a sudden hunted by a number of mysterious assassins. Que the wild, frothing at the mouth, frenzy of Neeson, backhanding his wife for being so forgetful and kidney punching said imposter with a fury even Chuck Norris couldn't muster.

Well actually no. In fact, the film suddenly takes on a whole new direction, positioning itself more in line with that of a thriller than a kick ass action sensation. Gone is the rough and tumble badass of old, and in with a whinging crybaby suffering from occasional bouts of falling unconscious.

The film is unfortunately a fraud; a cheap knock-off, the equivalent of a market bought sports watch made by brand the PUNA. Case in point, take a really close look at the poster for the movie and you'll notice Liam Neeson wielding a magnificent gleaming handgun of macho awesomeness. Go on admit it, Neeson looks well 'ard. But here's the kicker, and I assure you it's not a spoiler; there is no such macho gun in the movie, at least not in Neeson's hand, that is. In fact of what

little weaponry the film does exhibit, it's usually used to pistol whip Neeson across the face, and rightfully so for being such a sissy.

The truth is *Unknown* has begged, borrowed and stolen all its ideas from other great works such as *Bourne* and *Taken*, all in the name of facilitating it's own meandering and convoluted storyline. The film's plot might have grandiose dreams of pulling the wool over your eyes, but its unfortunately not as clever as it thinks it is, and as a result the end product is an awkwardly straddled mix of predictable twists and turns infrequently peppered with mediocre action sequences.

While the film is technically good, Unknown's story is, regrettably, completely devoid of value because it fails to occupy a unique space within cinema itself. So extensive is its pilfering of ideas from existing and well-known films that it has left itself exposed as a meagre mishmash that fails to excel in any particular department. Put bluntly, why waste your time watching Unknown, when you can watch a far superior film that formed the basis for it? **JW** 





## THE RESIDENT

DIRECTED BY ANTTI JOKINEN STARRING HILARY SWANK, Jeffrey Dean Morgan, Lee Pace, Christopher Lee, Aunjanue Ellis. Sean Rosales & Deborah Martinez

#### RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) MARCH II (UK)

The return of Hammer Horror should have given us excuse to cheer. The era when horror used the power of suggestion, well timed scares and innuendo now seems so long ago that the great Vincent Price and Christopher Lee films of the 1950s and '60s are commonly seen as anachronisms, quaint curiosities held up more as examples of kitsch than a template for great scares. The resurrection of the once mighty studio will for some offer hope of an antidote to the genre's current gory trends, but others will question whether Hammer can truly be at home in today's cinematic marketplace.

The Resident, then, is an early litmus test of Hammer's new output, and the results aren't good. A pleasantly old school plot sees Hilary Swank, playing a recently jilted doctor, move into a 'too good to be true' New York apartment. Prime real estate and a flirtation with her landlord, played by the ever charming Jeffrey Dean Morgan, offer Swank reasons to be cheerful, but she is made to feel less then safe by the presence of both Christopher Lee's creepy grandfather down the hall and the creeks and groans from the shadows during the night.

The setup is redolent of *Psycho*,

in which a vulnerable woman looking for a new start ends up on the wrong end of a psychopathic voyeur. Mixed in with some of the more explicitly sexual obsession motifs of '70s and '80s films, from *Play Misty For Me* to *Fatal Attraction*, as well as home invasion thrillers like *Pacific Heights* and *Unlawful Entry*, it's a million miles away from Hammer's British Gothic traditions.

The Resident still promises something more cerebral than Saw, however, and as Swank slowly falls in love with her apartment – and possibly her landlord – while still a little creeped out, director Antti Jokinen uses the camera like a voyeur, with soft focus replicating the human eye watching through a peephole. The apartment, full of dark, suggestive shadows, could easily contain a predator, and the early scenes let our mind play tricks on us.

Unfortunately, this is as far as the quality of *The Resident* goes, as Morgan, after a very short amount of screen time, is revealed to be the film's resident psycho. Thereafter, the film loses any sort of momentum, dropping the mystery as to whether Swank is being watched in favour of a countdown to the inevitable confrontation. What is most notable is just how unimaginatively the action then unfolds, essentially repeating the same sequence in which Morgan sneaks into Swank's apartment, and is nearly discovered before slinking out again.

Morgan completely fails to convince as a dangerous obsessive, and while he isn't helped by the clichéd, tossed off back story he is given; it's still unclear if he is capable of any

more than the gruff charm that has become his stock and trade. Swank for her part neither creates the sense of a cheated woman desperate to find a safe haven, nor brings the steely resolve that has been the mark of her best performances. Only Christopher Lee, playing Morgan's brooding family patriarch, brings any element of personality to proceedings. He is easily the most intimidating presence on show in the whole movie.

Both script and director fail to leave anything to our imaginations, having characters vocalise every thought and character trait. Jokinen even rewinds the film upon revealing his villain, taking us through every major plot point to show how Morgan's character has manipulated situations to his advantage, appearing to be a dashing protector while secretly feeding his perversions. It's the mark of a director neither trusting his audience nor his material.

The Resident, then, fails to scare or entertain, and giving Christopher Lee the slightest of roles merely draws attention to how far short it falls short of it's studio's heritage. The space behind Swank's apartment walls acts as her stalker's refuge, and in the film's final confrontation, the chase through this dark and creaky attic space recalls some kind of ghost train ride, with ghouls and bodies leaping from the shadows. It's another reminder of Hammer's past, but just serves to underline that while The Resident promises much from behind the scenes, there's nothing going on out front. AS





## HALL PASS

DIRECTED BY BOBBY & PETER FARRELLY STARRING OWEN WILSON, JASON SUDEIKIS, STEPHEN MERCHANT, JENNA FISCHER, CHRISTINA APPLEGATE & RICHARD JENKINS

#### **RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) MARCH 11 (UK)**

With their wives catching them checking out girls and, on a drunken boys' night in, joking how much they'd pay for the ultimate weekend away with a hooker, while there's still a lot going right in the marriages of Rick (Wilson) and Fred (Sudeikis), their partners are a little frustrated with their behaviour. If you thought therapy might be a bold approach, however, these girls take the biscuit, and grant their husbands a 'hall pass', hotfooting it to a parent's retreat, giving their husbands one week off, and the permission to do anything they please. But after more than a few years out of the game, Rick and Fred have some way to get back up to speed on what it's like back chasing

girls again.

While Hall Pass' premise has a lot of potential, sadly there just isn't enough craziness and debauchery to live up to it. Had the boys tried and failed to have raucous nights out, you could have accepted their strike outs, but they barely even attempt it, and you feel a little cheated watching on as they go for all you can eat BBQ before crashing back at the hotel, rather than staying out all night chatting up girls, as they had fantasised.

With Rick and Fred out raising hell, or at least more actively trying to hook up with women, there would have been plenty opportunities for comedy, but as it is, *Hall Pass* certainly doesn't reach double figures on the laugh count, it's instead the 'Day XX' inter-titles, and their timing, that prove most funny.

Owen Wilson is inoffensive and brings his usual charisma, and while latest *Saturday Night Live* break-out, Jason Sudeikis, proves he's a commanding comedy presence too, they're just given so little to play with. Across the board the talent do their best, it's just a very lacklustre script in their hands, further frustratingly painting Stephen Merchant's 'English friend' role in a drastically stereotypical light.

The Farrelly brothers try to give *Hall Pass* a little edge with a couple of cruder moments, but witty writing and much smarter comedy would have been a far better move.

The problem, in reality, is that the husbands don't really want the hall passes, meaning when they've got them, we're left with a week of two guys not even trying to make the most of their freedom, and though that alone doesn't make for enough of a movie, in *Hall Pass*, that's all you're going to get.

Some of the timing of the editing is great, and the Farrelly brothers tie together a smooth and sleek production, but they're thoroughly let down by their own script, and while you probably won't leave the film bored, you certainly won't have an aching stomach either. **SB** 



## WE ARE WHAT WE ARE

Overrated Mexican cannibal horror/drama about a family to begin kidnapping and eating unsuspecting members of the public. Effective in part but the narrative runs in fits and starts and quickly begins to drag in the second act.

Film ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★

## LET ME IN

Wonderful remake of the already great *Let The Right One In, Let Me In* though deserves its own place in history; a captivating story about a vampire girl who moves into a small community and befriends a young boy.

Film ★★★★ Extras ★★★

## THE KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT

Brilliant indie rom/com with superb performances across the board; when a brother and sister contact their biological father, he becomes a part of their lesbian parents' lives with fairly significant consequences.

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

## UNSTOPPABLE

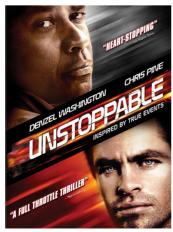
Lacklustre and surprisingly tedious thriller about two men who risk their lives to chase down and stop a runaway train. It might be 'based on true events', but that doesn't make it anything close to gripping.

Film  $\star\star\star\star\star$ Extras  $\star\star\star\star\star$ 

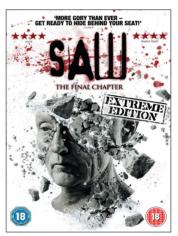
















## **JACKASS 3**

Third cinematic outing for the MTV hellraisers, this time they go bigger than ever with a heap of crazy stunts and just all-out stupidity. It's certainly not a watch you'll get the meaning of life from, but it's entertaining enough.

Film ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★

## SAW: THE FINAL CHAPTER

Apparently the last outing for serial killer Jigsaw, the death games make one final appearance and while it's not the worst of the bunch, it's far from the best.

Film ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★

## SKYLINE

Languid and boring SFX extravaganza from experts the Brothers Strause, for every minute they spent on the CGI alien spacecraft, however, they skipped a minute writing the script, and it quickly shows.

Film  $\star\star\star\star\star$ Extras  $\star\star\star\star\star$ 

## LIFE AS WE KNOW IT

Rom/com about a would-be couple thrown together to look after their recently departed friends' newborn kid. Amusing in parts, it's sadly more than predictable and you'll guess the entire plot long before the end.

Film ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★







### I KNOW, I HEAR BY CHELSEE IVAN



OUT OF THE WILDERNESS BY JUAN SOLON



BACKFLASHES BY RUEDIGER GLATZ



HURRICANES FOR HIRE BY JACK CROSSING



## I KNOW, I HEAR

PHOTOGRAPHY CHELSEE IVAN (CHELSEEIVAN.COM)



































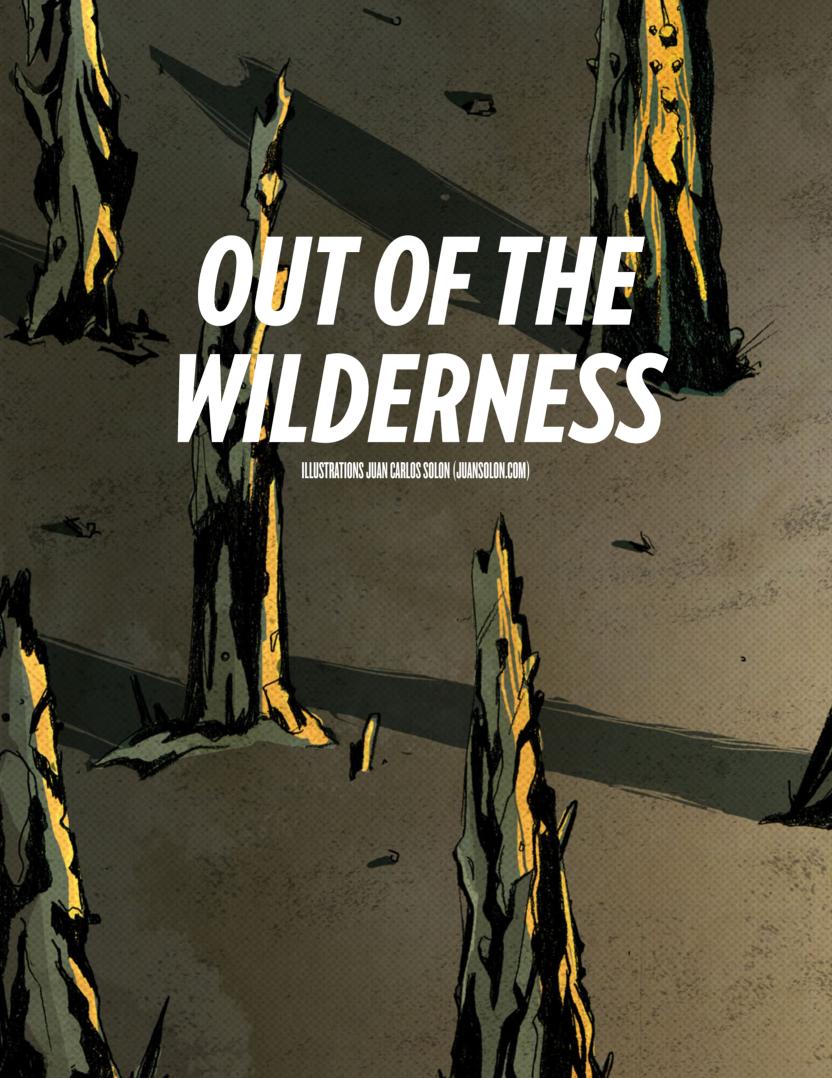










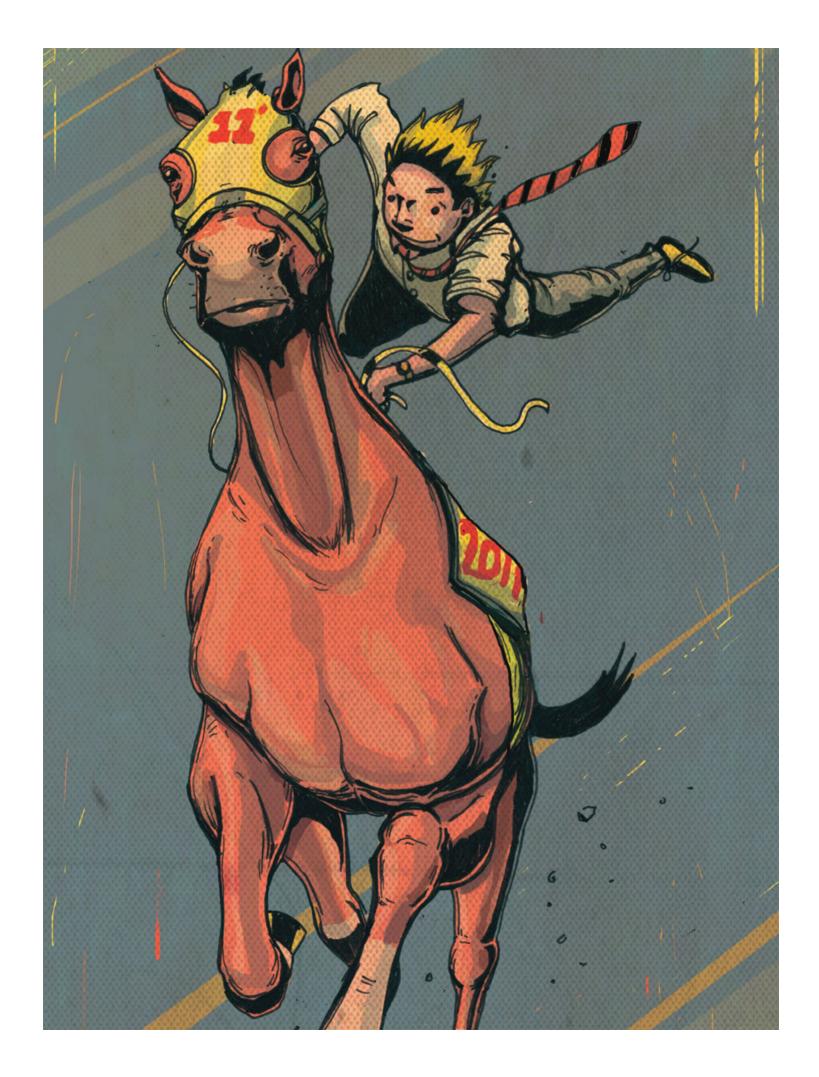




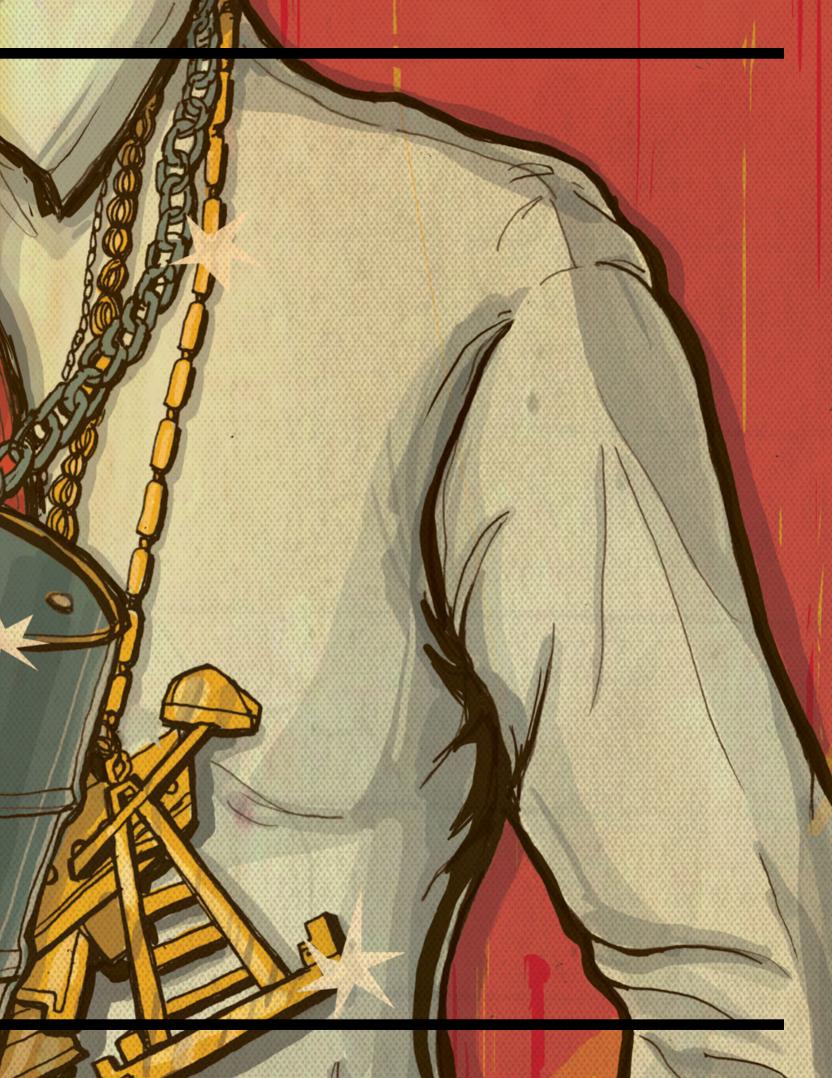




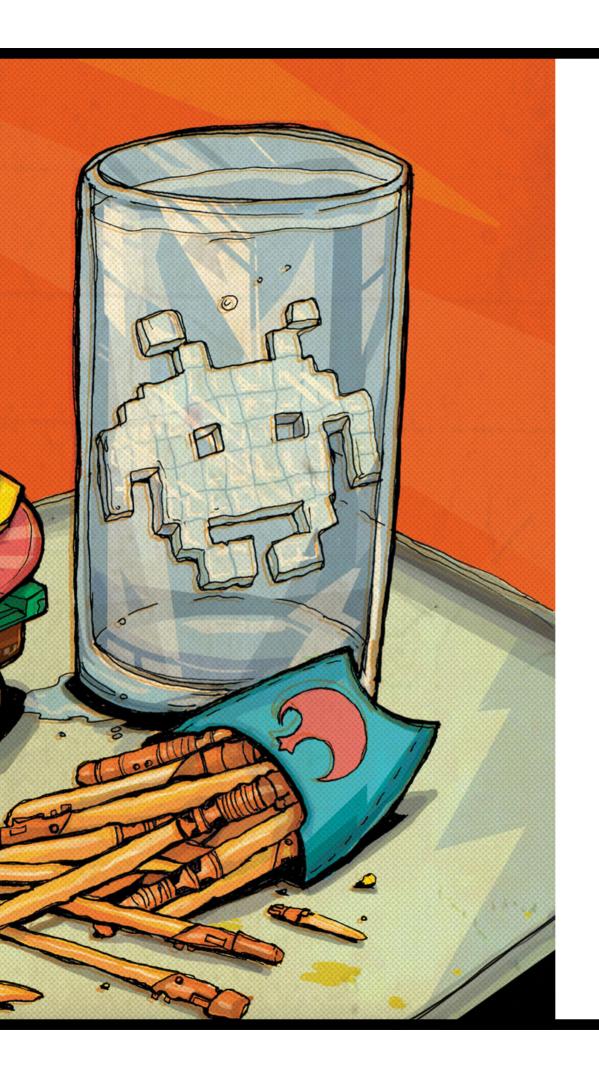






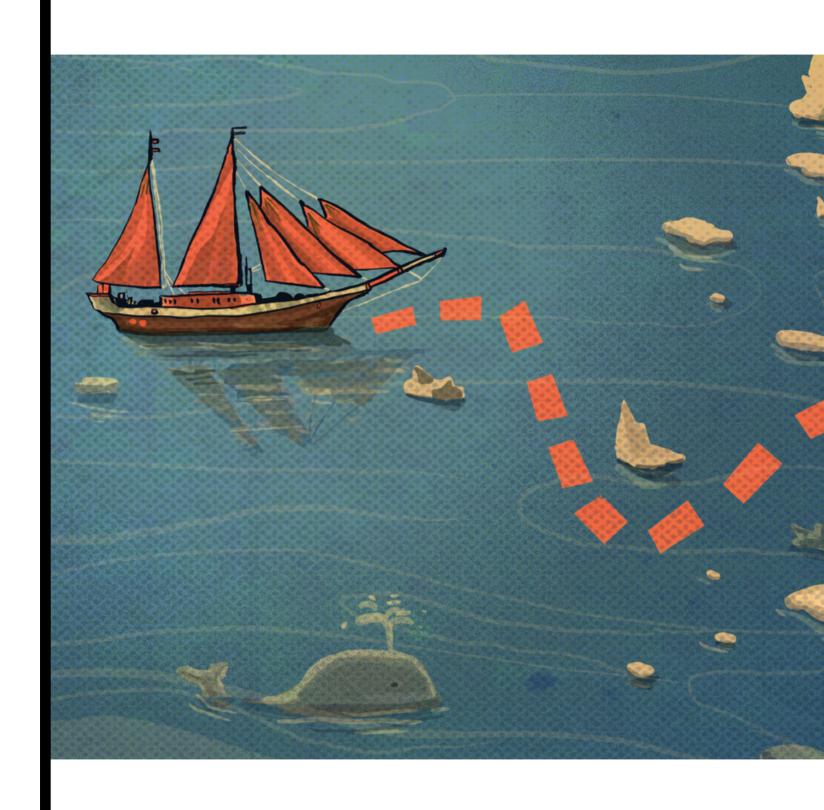




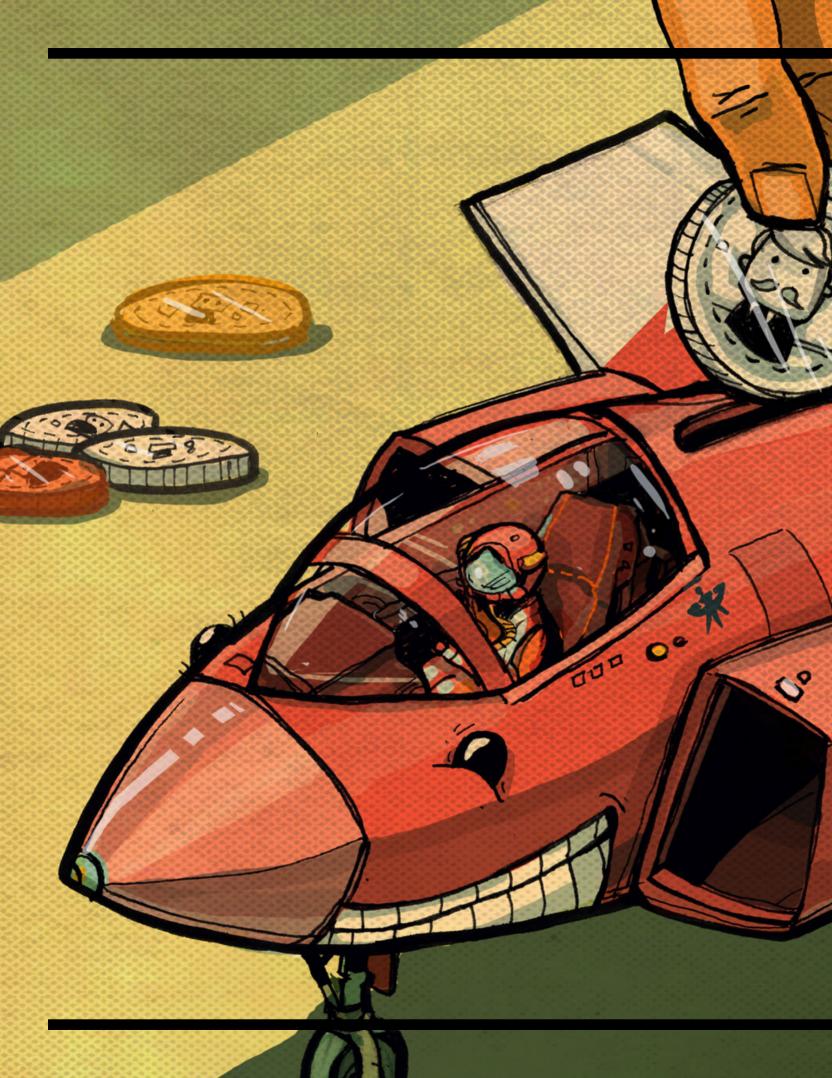




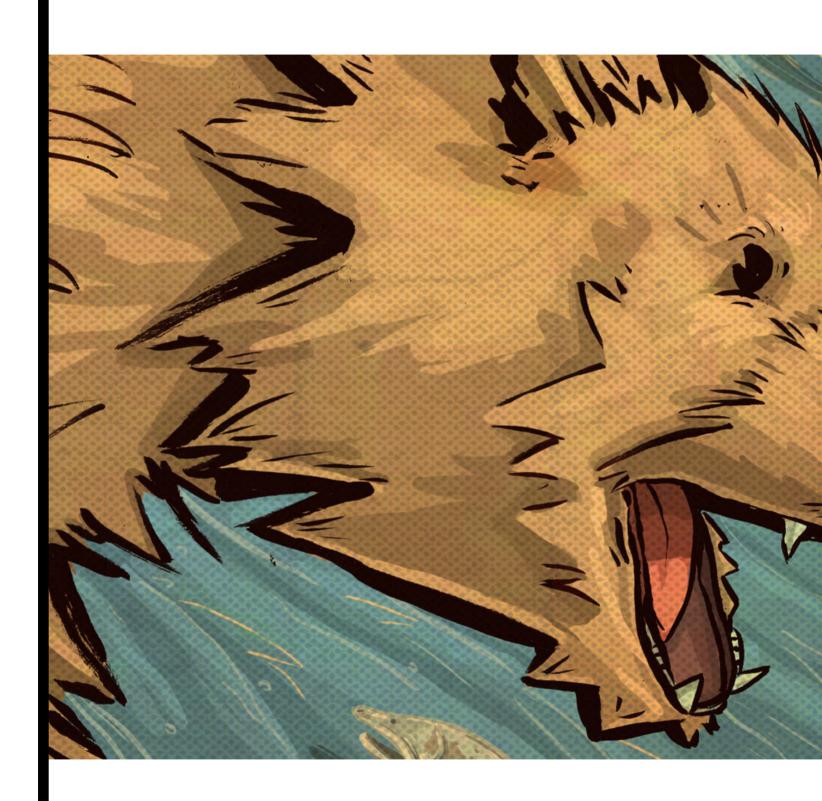














## Backflashes

PHOTOGRAPHY RUEDIGER GLATZ (RUEDIGERGLATZ.COM)

























































## FLYING UPSIDE DOWN BY JEFF OLSON



STATIC ON THE WIRE BY JESSICA KLINGELFUSS



THE BREAKFAST CLUB
BY JUSTIN HOLLAR



LUNCH IS FOR WIMPS BY SIMONE FALCETTA



## FISH ENDER TO SERVICE OF THE PROPERTY OF THE P

PHOTOGRAPHY JEFF OLSON (OLSONFOTO.COM)



















## Static on the Mire of the Mire

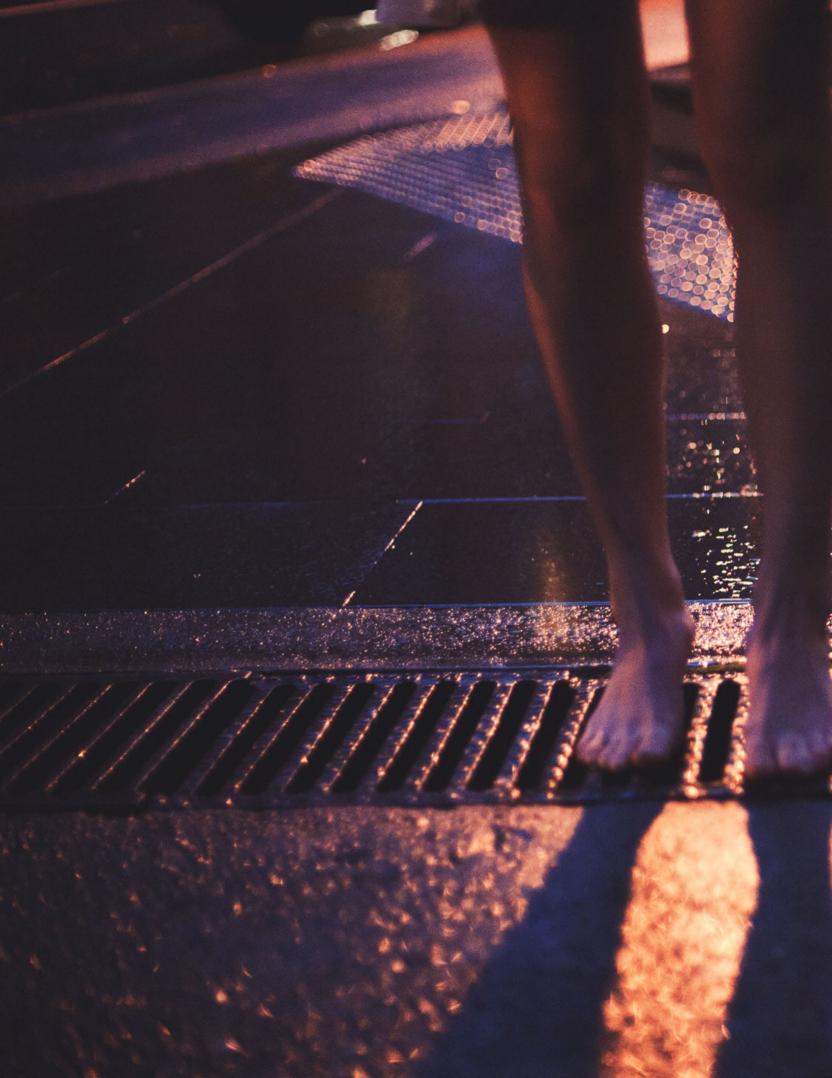
PHOTOGRAPHY JESSICA KLINGELFUSS (JESSICAKLINGELFUSS.COM)
HAIR & MAKE-UP EMMA WILSON
MODEL ELISE PEARSON (PLATFORM)

































## The breakfast club

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

O Manufactured by



















