

# FANTASY FIRE

ISSUE #47 // OCTOBER 2011



REAL ESTATE  
THE HELP INTERVIEWS  
JUSTICE  
THE ADVENTURES OF TINTIN  
WE NEED TO TALK  
ABOUT KEVIN  
AMBER CHAVEZ  
AXEL BRECHENSBAUER  
MARKUS ZIEGLER

## A RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

THE DEVIL OFFERS DILIA OVIEDO  
A DEAL TOO GOOD TO REFUSE



# Lacklustre and lamentable. New fall TV.



I'm probably not old enough to call myself a real 'veteran' of TV just yet, but still, I can't remember a fall season of new shows that has been quite so lacklustre as this. Hopes were high too; Spielberg is back in the game, Jonathan Nolan was to make his small screen debut, while filmstars like Christina Ricci, Kat Dennings, Christina Applegate and Hank Azaria were all to front their own new shows. But from a wealth of titles across such a breadth of US networks, there are not even a handful worth sticking out.

Perhaps it was because of such a busy summer that we awaited the September/October span with such excitement. Normally a period of downtime between the finales of shows beginning this time last year, the June-August months are intentionally downplayed, we're meant to be making to most of the summer sun and getting active after all, but summer 2011 was the best for TV in recent memory.

With easy-going legal drama *Suits* proving a remarkably entertaining surprise, plus the likes of new (and utterly encapsulating) *Breaking Bad* filling the gap too, it's fair to say the small screen

kept us busy, but it's a peak that hasn't been matched since September.

Across entertainment, in film, music, and pretty much everything else, budgets are going down, and TV has proven no different. There has been promise in a couple of titles but such dreadful production values and laughable one-off locations have blighted their reputation beyond repair. *Ringer*, starring Sarah Michelle Gellar no less, had the right ingredients there; an intriguing mystery-centred story, solid acting talent, room to develop, but as early as the pilot, a crucial sequence on the water was filmed so cack-handedly I wanted to switch off there and then.

Some shows are even being given the financial chance too. Boasting one of the biggest production budgets in TV history, and a "serious financial commitment" as proclaimed by Fox execs., *Terra Nova*, a show set in a dinosaur-laden landscape, features lumbering creatures myself on one day of Maya training could better. The digital landscapes and sets are terrible too, and have nothing on Spielberg's other dinosaur adventures in *Jurassic Park*.

Without a commitment to a full season, numerous networks have already pulled the plug on some of their biggest debuts. NBC has canned *The Playboy Club* and *Free Agents*, Charlie's Angels has gone too and it's only a matter of time for *2 Broke Girls* and *Revenge*. Even *Up All Night*, which has miraculously been given a full season order, will have to pull off an even bigger shock to be renewed next year.

What's good? Well Zooey Deschanel's *New Girl* has been improving every episode and might just make the cut, *Pan Am* is the only *Mad Men*-era copy to prove effective too, plus *Person Of Interest* from the aforementioned Jonathan Nolan was always going to be a contender. Old favourites though are the main highlight, *Bored To Death* has come back with a pretty loud bang, while *How I Met Your Mother* and *It's Always Sunny In Philadelphia* were always unlikely to disappoint.

Hopefully next year I'm talking about how successful everything has been, and we don't have another repeat of this horror show.

**Sam Bathe**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



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# FRIDAY NIGHT FIST FIGHT

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AT THE OLD BLUE  
LAST, LONDON

ARTWORK BY  
CESAR MORENO



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# FAN THE FIRE

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**KURT VILE**



**THE RETURN OF  
BORED TO DEATH**



**ALINE WEBER**



**NEW GIRL**



**THE SEASON FINALE OF  
BREAKING BAD**



**BODEAN'S**



**THE RETURN OF  
HOW I MET YOUR MOTHER**



**CRITICAL MASS**





**SERENA WILLIAMS**



**SADDLE COLOUR  
RUN-OFF**



**REUNITING THE RUBINS**



**BLACKBERRY'S DATA  
SERVICES DOWNGAGE**

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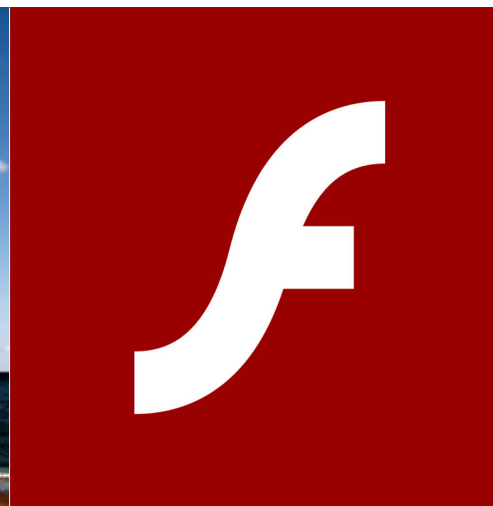
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**LOW BUDGET SFX  
IN NEW TV SHOWS**



**POINTLESS REVIEW  
EMBARGOES**



**FLASH PLUG-IN  
CRASHES**





**MUSIC**





WU LYF



WAVVES



COLLEGE



COM  
TRUISE



ALBUM REVIEWS



# All for one, and one for all. WU LYF.

WORDS COCO WONG





I remember when I first saw the lauded promo pic of WU LYF (left), their four members with handkerchiefs wrapped around their faces, hands in the air with smoke in the foreground, I thought to myself, are they the northern version of London band Is Tropical? The answer is no.

WU LYF is short for World United Lucifer Youth Foundation, which was founded by four 'dumb kids' and is defined by its own manifesto as 'nothing'. Back in the early days of the band's formation, they caused quite a stir in the media for their anonymity. It wasn't until some time that we knew the four members of the band were Joe Manning, El-lery Roberts, Evans Kati and Tom McClung.

The foundation is a legitimate one, where you can buy a membership for £15. You might wonder why get a membership? Well, a tantalising feature is that you get discounted admission to all of WU LYF's shows, a.k.a 'Play Heavy Pop' shows. It also helps fund the independence of the band, who decided to decline offers from labels but self-release everything through LYF recordings.

The marching band-like drumbeats heard on WU LYF's tracks well reflect the four-piece's youth cult image; further enhanced by a fair share of chanting. Their songs are also very rich in organ, which in a sense, neutralises the rage the band frequently express. *Go Tell Fire To The Mountain* is WU LYF's debut album, recorded, produced and released all by the four members themselves. Sticking to the band's independent method of operation, they recorded the entire album at St Peter's Church in Manchester.

LYF opens the album with a jam of organ and guitar, but the sense of serenity is soon broken by the joining of drums and coarse vocals. Fan-favourite, *Dirt*, has an energetic intro; the crashes paint a vivid image of ignited flamethrowers in riots. Upcoming single, *We Bros*, revolves mainly around the chorus 'We bros you lost man / we bros so long / put away your guns man / and sing this song'. All in all, an intense, relentless song, with the band no shy about making a statement. No wonder the fans of WU LYF call each other 'bros'.

From the home to many influential bands including New Order, Oasis and Joy Division, WU LYF seem begging to differ from the 'traditional Manchester sound' and create one of their own.

*We Bros* is available on 12" vinyl or digitally through LYF Recordings on November 7th







# Chaos in order. Wavves.

WORDS SAM BATHE

If you've been following the progress of Nathan Williams' solo project-turned three-piece, Wavves, then you'll know it's been quite the rocky journey for the San Diego musician to date.

Recording two pretty brilliant LPs in his bedroom, and touring with then-friend Ryan Ulsh filling in as a live drummer, a drug-induced meltdown at Primavera a couple of years ago almost called time on the lo-fi musician's career. With Ulsh leaving after the William's on-stage antics ruined their relationship, Stephen Pope and Billy Hayes took up the slack, both formerly touring musicians for Jay Reatard, and summer 2010 brought the impressive

comeback LP *King Of The Beach*.

Since then, things have calmed down, and despite Jacob Cooper, formerly of The Mae Shi, replacing Hayes, it's been a year of calm in comparison to Williams' life before.

One half of a lo-fi super-couple, with Williams dating Bethany Consentino of Best Coast, Wavves remain a pretty public advocate of the use of marijuana, but the more serious drugs he had previously been taking appear to be out of the window. New management helped with that, and now Williams' new EP *Life Sux* finds life on his own label too, named after his infamous *Ghost Ramp* blog.

Featuring collaboration with Best Coast and friends F\*cked Up, Williams talks of recording *Life Sux* as being a completely different process to their last, more label-influenced, record. With the freedom to take it truly in their own direction, the EP still proves to be at times as downbeat as ever, but with the next record, Williams jokes will be their *Life Is Cool* release. The riffs though are still as catchy as ever, especially on single *I Wanna Meet Dave Grohl*, and the future again is bright, perhaps the brightest it's ever been, for the talented Nathan Williams and his lo-fi band, Wavves. *New EP Life Sux is out now*







There are quite a few un-Googleable band names out there, but College is probably up there with the best (worst?) of them. Tack 'band' onto the end of it too, and you're still no closer to finding out just a smidgen about a music project dragged right into the public conscious by Nicolas Winding Refn's *Drive*. With single *A Real Hero* featured on the movie's soundtrack, David Grellier has found himself hitting the heights he's always deserved under moniker College.

Born in 1979 in Nantes, Grellier took his first steps into music in the late 1990s after buying his first computer. Influenced by artists like Jeff Mills and Aphex Twin and labels like Soma Records, Warp and Peacefrog, David put together numerous demos, although it wasn't until he met Anoraak in early 2007 that things really kicked into gear.

Starting *Valerie Collective*, a blog, record label and output for their and

their friends' productions, they were soon joined by The Outrunners, Mathelvin and Russ Chines in releasing work, with Grellier's own debut, the *Teenage Color* EP, released that same year.

A collaboration with Electric Youth, it was *A Real Hero* that has really built the College name. Alongside Kavinsky, Desire and Cliff Martinez's stunning score, the *Drive* soundtrack has rightly drawn critical acclaim, and Grellier's work is at the heart of that, despite an initial release two years ago now.

But the pounding *Answers* and

silky *The Drone* are great tracks too, and while *A Real Hero* has unsurprisingly been re-released to coincide with

the popularity of the *Drive* OST, College are far from a one-trick pony, and something Grellier has further built up through *Valerie*.

With a debut album put out on Valerie Records in 2009, enticingly entitled *Secret Diary*, Grellier toured alongside Anoraak across Europe, Australia and the US. That brought about the

collaboration with Electric Youth, and their EP out on Flexx Records, and as they say, the rest is history.

## **THE DRIVE SOUNDTRACK HAS RIGHTLY DRAWN CRITICAL ACCLAIM, AND GRELLIER'S WORK IS AT THE HEART OF THAT**





It doesn't take a genius to figure out where Seth Haley got the name for alter-ego music project Com Truise, so before the Scientology lawsuits flood in, it's probably a good job that he's put out three releases already, all in 2011.

Flittering between Sarin Sunday, SYSTM and Airliner before landing on his current moniker, Seth started out as a DJ before quickly stepping up his efforts on a few solo tracks. Described by label Ghostly as "softer, window-fogging synth-wave", his style falls in alongside peers Neon Indian and Washed Out, and is being pushed unfortunately into the frustrating sub-genre of chillwave. Though as BBC Music points out, many of his ideals do prove to be "painfully emblematic" of the down-trodden niche, Haley's music is worth so much more than a schlocky buzzword or two.

The self-exclaimed 'super-nerd' boasts an '80s-influenced, synth-heavy style, with technicolour album art to front his three finished records. First putting out the *Cyanide Sisters EP*

early this year – distributed for free on the AMdiscs label – followed up by full length *Galactic Melt* in June, and more recently an EP entitled *Fairlight*, there's no doubting Haley has been a busy boy in what has become a real breakthrough year. The result of some 18 months' work, the increasing buzz surrounding Com Truise and the aforementioned releases have meant that at last the musician was able to quit a dreary full-time job in mid-July.

A big sci-fi fan, with the *Blade Runner* soundtrack on repeat when he hits the road, Seth has just finished a nationwide US tour with Neon Indian and will travel to Europe in November for a similarly expansive set of dates;

it's fair to say that's it's been a crazy 10 months for the upstate New Yorker, but he certainly isn't resting on his laurels just yet.

With a wealth of remixes under his belt, from (again) Neon Indian to Twin Shadow and fellow next-big-thing FOE, Haley has come a long way since the days of getting suspended from school for hacking into their computers, although it's such nostalgia that gives his music such an effortlessly alluring feel. Com Truise is the "soundtrack to an epic movie that hasn't been made yet", and with more on the way,

we eagerly await the next from his taut and talented imagination. *EP Fairlight is out now*

**COM TRUISE IS THE "SOUNDTRACK TO AN EPIC MOVIE THAT HASN'T BEEN MADE YET"**





## REAL ESTATE DAYS

RELEASED OCTOBER 17

Though it has quite clearly been released a few months too late, for subtle indie-rock, Real Estate's sound-of-the-summer album *Days*, still makes quite the impact.

The New Jersey-born, now Brooklynite four-piece are the right side of calmer guitar music, with a much better output than the folk-led brigade that have largely taken over the scene of late, and alongside touring buddies Kurt Vile, will be one of the big winners as the year's end comes to a head.

Like on their self-titled debut, it's the opener that pretty much steals the headlines. *Easy* is a momentum-driven, hook-heavy dream of a track, with calming vocals taking a back seat to the massively catchy guitar and teasing percussion. There's much more elsewhere though too. Recorded in remote barn-stroke-studio with producer Kevin McMahon (The Walkmen), this is an album you need to devour in full, and devour it you will. Real Estate are your new band crush. **SB**

★★★★★



## YOUTH LAGOON THE YEAR OF HIBERNATION

RELEASED OUT NOW

Trevor Powers had a tough year. Dealing the stresses of college, falling in love and having his heart broken, he has one of those stories of a young kid writing about his trials and tribulations before crafted a bedroom-recorded LP to get it all out. Only *The Year Of Hibernation* isn't a lazy ramble, nor timid production too, at times this may be a little basic, but that's to be expected, and the end result is nothing short of remarkable.

Picked up by the ever-reliable indie label Fat Possum, Youth Lagoon's debut has a touch of Animal Collective about it, a compliment to any musician, never mind a rookie, tempering the use of reverb to add depth without overpowering the feedback.

*Cannons* is probably the pick of the LP but on the whole this is calm, controlled and frequently beautiful. There is stuff here that a seasoned musician couldn't rustle up, so great credit must go to Trevor Powers for his dedication and seemingly natural talent. **TM**

★★★★★



## JUSTICE AUDIO, VIDEO, DISCO

RELEASED OCTOBER 25

To say the electro scene has missed Justice over the last couple of years would be a gigantic understatement; music has missed Justice. And to say we're please about their return, would be a massive understatement too.

A little more chilled out after a couple of years away from the game, *Audio, Video, Disco* doesn't ever feel like it's holding back, but it's a touch more subdued than the, at times, rampant *Cross*. But never fear, the Parisien producer duo certainly still know what they doing, and laden with signature drops, emphatic beats and heavily-pumping riffs, *Audio, Video, Disco* is as much a collection of dancefloor fillers as anything they've ever released.

The title track comes last, proof enough of just how strong this record is, and although the new italo-disco tinge isn't quite a home run on every track, this is probably the best dance LP of the year. **SB**

★★★★★



## VERONICA FALLS VERONICA FALLS

RELEASED OCTOBER 17

Veronica Falls were massively impressive at SXSW. We went over there with the aim to stick to bands not from our UK shores, never mind fellow Londoners, but delighted to stumble into their show off the back of an intriguing band name, we were certainly impressed.

After a string of well-received singles, therefore, it's fair to say we have been looking forward to that eponymous debut album, though sadly, it's isn't everything we had hoped for. While Veronica Falls' twee, lo-fi indie pop certainly strikes a chord, on record, the 12 tracks feel a little drab and dull. They lack a certain variation, and though in chunks their music is very appealing, for more than 30 minutes straight, the tone grows unfortunately monotonous.

There are big highlights, but on the whole, Veronica Fall's self-titled debut is frustratingly hit-and-miss. Hopefully they step it up on album number two because there is a lot of potential in this band. **TM**

★★★★★



**FILM**



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DVD AND  
BLU-RAY  
REVIEWS

# IN TIME

**RELEASED** OCTOBER 28 (USA) NOVEMBER 1 (UK)

Prepare for questionable high-concept science in this film from Andrew Niccol, starring Justin Timberlake. Set in a future where the ageing gene has been “switched off”, time itself has become currency. The rich are essentially immortal, while the poor are forced to work endlessly for scraps of time, simply to keep themselves alive. Timberlake stars as Will, a man who is accused of murder when he inherits a great deal of time after the death of an old, upper-class citizen. Forced to go on the run, he partners up with Sylvia (Amanda Seyfried) and must avoid the attentions of the Timekeepers, a police-like government agency.

The setup for this story may not be entirely original, but it is at least interesting. The concept of time as currency is powerful, and of course draws parallels to real world economics. How well the film deals with its broad theme will be crucial to its success; with such a strong concept behind it, there is plenty of room for emotional weight and dramatic significance to be given to the inevitable action sequences. Given the potential inherent in this storyline, the film will live and die by its ability – or inability – to function as *intelligent* mainstream entertainment.

The choice of leads is interesting; Timberlake and Seyfried will need to be on top form to justify their star billing. But there is talent all around the production. Acclaimed cinematographer Roger Deakins will be behind the cameras, while Cillian Murphy, who can't seem to put a foot wrong at present, will provide villainy as a member of the Timekeepers chasing Will and Sylvia. *In Time* has the potential to be a good, solid autumn picture; hopefully Niccol (directing for the first time since 2005's *Lord Of War*) will bring his ingredients together successfully. **MR**











# DAMSELS IN DISTRESS

RELEASED Q4 2011

Whit Stillman's *Damsels In Distress* is a comedy about three girls who attempt to revolutionise life at a boring American university. The film will chart their successes and failures in this regard, as well as with a series of romantic interests which threaten to break up their friendships.

The three girls are played by Greta Gerwig, Megalyn Echikunwoke and Carrie MacLemore, and are later joined by transfer student Lily (Analeigh Tipton). Amongst their love interests, Adam Brody – whose film career has

yet to properly take off – plays the smooth-talking Charlie.

The film's star is undoubtedly Greta Gerwig, ironic given the fact she has mostly been prominent in indie productions up until recently. Her rising star could give the film a much-needed boost out of obscurity and into the mainstream. Brody, too, carries a degree of star quality, as many viewers still remember him fondly from the small screen in *The O.C.* This is likely to be an indie-spirited production, though quite what tone the film will

aim for in terms of its comedy is yet to be established. Whether it will purposefully aim for a quirky sensibility, or embrace a broader style of mainstream comedy, will likely affect its box office chances. There have been a lot of loud, adult comedies thrown at audiences this summer, and surprisingly a lot of them have been very successful. Audiences clamouring for something different may find a lot to like when *Damsels in Distress* is released, although the exact date of that release is yet to be decided. **MR**







# THE BIG YEAR

**RELEASED** OCTOBER 14 (USA) MARCH 23, 2012 (UK)

Based on the book *The Big Year: A Tale Of Man, Nature And Fowl Obsession* by Mark Obmascik, this ensemble comedy (quite a few of those floating around at the moment) tells the tale of group of friends who set out on a birdwatching 'big year'; that is, an attempt to locate as many individual bird species as possible within a single year.

The most obvious difference between this ensemble and the classy cast list of something like *Crazy, Stupid, Love* is that the leads are not exactly in the primes of their careers. Our three leads are Steve Martin, whose output of late has been sporadic and only sporadically interesting, Jack Black, who is coming off the back of *Year One* and *Gulliver's Travels*, and Owen Wilson, who to be fair seems to be working his way out of a bit of a lull. These are all funny people when they're on form, so their talents will hopefully spark each other into life.

The film is directed by David Frankel, who also directed Owen Wilson in *Marley & Me*, and has a supporting cast including Rashida Jones, Anjelica Huston and Diane Wiest. It's not a fantastically exciting prospect at present – this kind of life-affirming buddy comedy comes around at least once a year – but it could be a lot of fun if the performances are up to scratch. There should also be plenty of varied location photography to help the film stand out from its peers. **MR**













A man with a shaved head, wearing a dark jacket and large headphones, is shown in profile, looking intently at a computer monitor. The background is a dimly lit control room with various pieces of equipment and a glowing blue light source.

# RED LIGHTS

RELEASED 2012

Most people would agree, even if they didn't much like it, that Rodrigo Cortés' *Buried* was a daring and technically interesting attempt at a thriller. It drew a great performance from Ryan Reynolds too, so this is a director we should have a lot of time for, and it is with interest that we look forward to *Red Lights*, Cortés' next venture.

Helming an impressive cast which includes the likes of Robert de Niro,

Sigourney Weaver and Cillian Murphy, Cortés' latest focuses on a psychologist (played by Weaver) who, along with her assistant, is studying paranormal activity. Their studies lead them to investigate a world-renowned psychic (de Niro). As yet a lot of details are yet to be fully announced regarding this project, but it certainly sounds like it could be interesting, particularly with supporting character actors like Toby

Jones also getting involved.

A promotional shot of the film – in which de Niro stands, dressed all in black, against a draped curtain – gives some idea as to the mood of the thing. It's a dark, brooding shot which offers a lot of promise. Cortés looks to be a talented director and if the script (which he also wrote) is solid, we could be in for a psychological treat come release next year. **MR**



# CORIOLANUS

**RELEASED** JANUARY 13, 2012 (USA) JANUARY 20, 2012 (UK)

Ralph Fiennes makes his directorial debut with this gritty, modern realisation of Shakespearian tragedy *Coriolanus*, bringing the classic story to a contemporary warzone setting. The original play concerns a legendary Roman general, Caius Martius (in this version is played by Fiennes himself), whose views conflict with the Roman public and eventually lead to his banishment and other unsavoury events.

Fiennes is working from a script by John Logan, the talented scriptwriter responsible for films such as *Gladiator*, *The Last Samurai* and *The Aviator*. Shot in Belgrade, the film has already received a bit of positive festival buzz. Fiennes – obviously proven as an actor already – is unproven as a director, but somehow the prospect of him taking a place behind the camera seems natural. Adapting Shakespeare is difficult, so he hasn't gone easy on himself to begin with, but visually at least, he seems to have a strong eye. His vast experience on stage too (where he has starred in many Shakespeare productions, including *Coriolanus*) should also help guide his directorial hand.

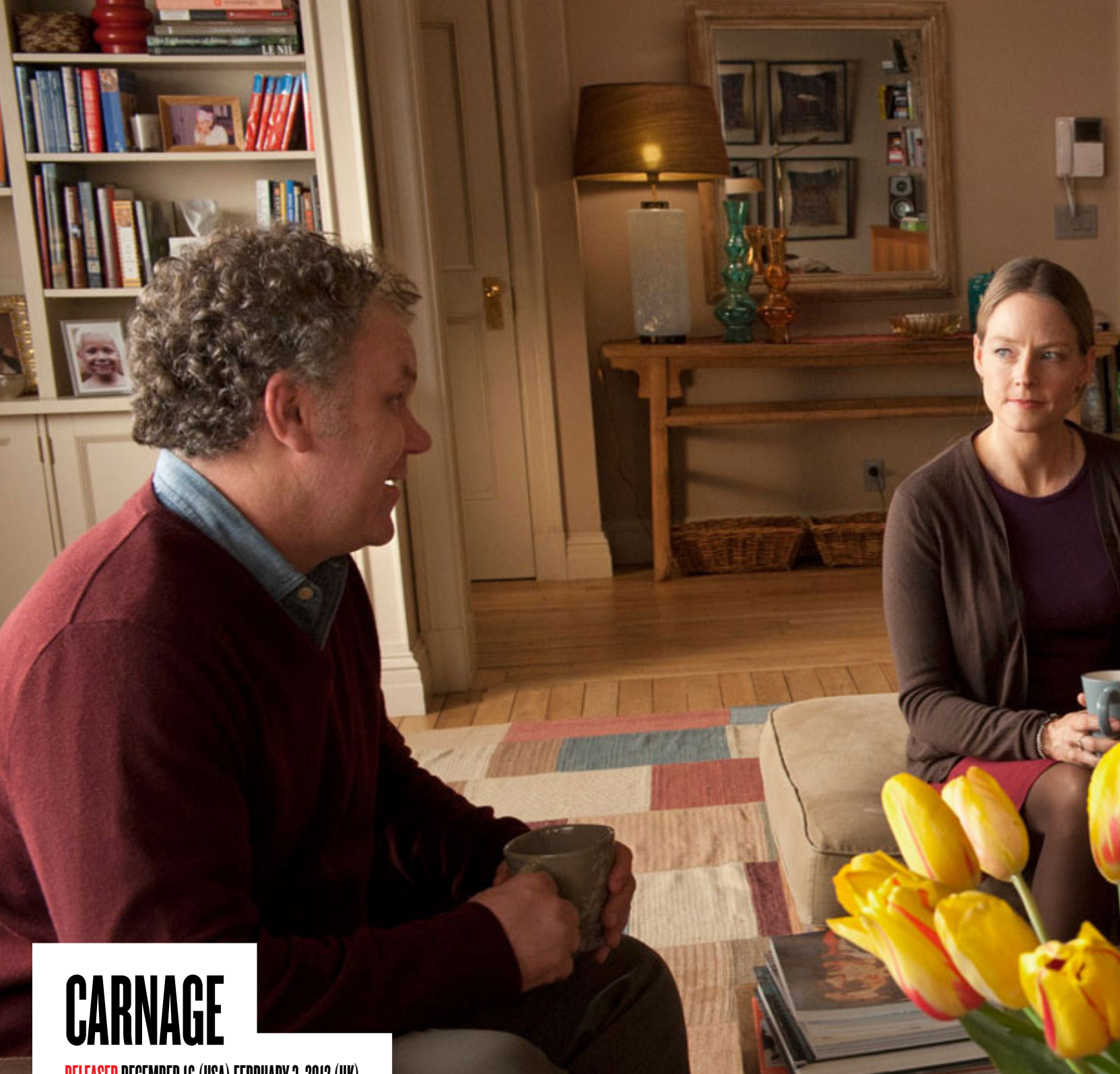
Fiennes is joined on screen by Gerard Butler (as Aufidius) as well as a whole host of talent including the ever-more-ubiquitous Jessica Chastain (who has proven her chameleonic qualities already this year thanks to tonally disparate performances in *Tree Of Life*, *The Debt* and *The Help*) and veteran performers like Brian Cox and Vanessa Redgrave. All in all, this adaptation looks strong, with talent in all the right places. As Baz Luhrmann proved with his modernised version of *Romeo And Juliet*, Shakespeare still has the power to capture the minds of younger generations. This looks more serious-minded and is unlikely to attract such an audience, but at present it certainly looks on course for a good reception. **MR**











# CARNAGE

**RELEASED** DECEMBER 16 (USA) FEBRUARY 3, 2012 (UK)

Over the course of his long career, Roman Polanski has proven himself a more than capable director in a remarkable variety of genres, from psychological horror (*Rosemary's Baby*) to noir thrillers (*Chinatown*) and war time dramas (*The Pianist*). Last year's *The Ghost Writer* was well-received, and so here we are with *Carnage*, a black comedy about squabbling parents.

Based on the stage play *God Of Carnage* by Yasmina Reza (whose script

was adapted for the screen by Polanski) the film boasts a promising quartet of lead actors. In the story, two sets of parents meet to discuss the fact that their respective children have had a fight at school that day. Those parents are played here by Jodie Foster and John C. Reilly (as the Longstreets) and Kate Winslet and Christoph Waltz (as the Cowans). Naturally, the discussions take an increasingly sour turn.

The play has been lauded under

the guise of various productions to date, so Polanski has clearly chosen wisely for his latest project. The possibilities for dark laughs in this set up are fantastic, and with the cast he has at his disposal, he'd be hard pressed to put out a picture which isn't at the very least, interesting. With music by Alexandre Desplat (who also scored *The Ghost Writer*) all the materials are in place here for Polanski to craft a successful black comedy. **MR**





INTERVIEW WITH

***TATE TAY-  
LOR, EMMA  
STONE, VI-  
OLA DAVIS  
& OCTAVIA  
SPENCER***

DIRECTOR AND STARS OF *THE HELP*

WORDS BY SAM BATHE



Exploring the lives behind the pinafores of black housemaids in 1960s Mississippi, *The Help* is an endearing tale of friendship and life in-amongst racial adversity. An honest and caring portrayal, the film sees aspiring author Skeeter Phelan (Stone) not crow to her ignorant friends, and help a small band of maids tell their story, writing an account of life on a day-to-day basis and the white families they work for.

**FAN THE FIRE:** Tate [Taylor, director], you seem to have been born to make this film, can you elaborate on how it came to be in the first place?

**TATE TAYLOR:** It all began with the book; Kathryn Stockett and I have been friends since we were about five-years-old, consistently good friends; we were always there for each other in Jackson, Mississippi. We didn't quite fit into the Hilly Holbrook [nemesis character in *The Help*] set, nor did our mothers, that's where a lot of the inspiration came from, that pain her mother and my mother all felt, and we've always supported each other. And then 9/11 happened and we still shared an apartment in New York in East Village. She was living there with her husband and I was living in LA and she just called me really depressed, blue like everyone; "nothing seems to work anymore, how do we get through this?", and she said, "you know Tate, the only thing that would make me feel better right now is if I could go back in time and be with Demetrie in my grandparents' kitchen, she would tell me what to do." That was the woman that worked for her family for 29 years but she had deceased, and Kathryn became immediately stricken and ashamed with how she selfishly knew very little about her as a person, didn't know much about her outside of her uniform. So as an exercise that day, just to be able to talk to this woman who had passed away, she started writing short stories in Demetrie's voice, just rambling, guessing who her friends were and what they would talk about, and she couldn't stop; five years later that became *The Help*.

I knew she was writing a book,

**“WHAT REALLY HIT HOME WITH ME WAS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAE MOBLEY AND AIBILEEN, BECAUSE I HAD THAT RELATIONSHIP IN MY LIFE WITH THIS WOMAN.”**

but she wouldn't let me read it, she didn't want her loved ones or family and friends to judge her, and then after her 60th rejection I was having lunch with her and she just said "you know what, you can read this thing, nothing's ever going to happen with it, and you've been driving me crazy; go ahead, you're probably going to hate it." I started reading it on the plane and was just blown away, immediately seeing it as a film.

Beyond the nostalgia of us both being from that small town, what really hit home with me was the relationship between Mae Mobley and Aibileen, because I had that relationship in my life with this woman. My mother was a single mother, like Kathryn's, trying to feed and clothe me, and she brought a woman into our home in Carol Lee who basically co-raised me, so my mom could work. That was when I realised that these women are such pivotal parts of our lives, of so many people's lives, and yet we've never really gotten to hear about them and who they are, outside of being a uniform in a kitchen. I wanted to show people who they are, not to say thank you, not to pay tribute, but I just wanted people to know who these people were, and they deserved, to be known about. Then I got the rights and wrote the script all that before the book came out, and we thought that we were go-

ing to make this little independent film, to help my friend get her book published. That business model kind of flip-flopped.

**FTF:** Octavia, There is a rumour amongst your friends, of whom Kathryn Stockett is one, that she might have borrow a few of your characteristics for Minnie, I hope that didn't include your pie-baking skills?

**OCTAVIA SPENCER:** Oh, it definitely didn't include my pie-baking skills, because I have none. I don't cook at all, that's how I recruit friends; they have to be good looking, and they have to know how to cook [laughs]. No, I mean Kathryn did loosely base a couple of traits of Minnie's perhaps on me; we're both short, can be a little volatile, and, err, round [laughs], that's probably about it. And I hope I'm as loyal a friend as Minnie, that's probably where the similarities end.

**FTF:** Emma, Skeeter goes on a really enriching journey being exposed to multi-generational, interesting women, I wondered if you related to that, because suddenly you're there with actresses including these two [Octavia Spencer, Viola Davis] and Cicely Tyson and Allison Janney, did you relate to Skeeter in that you and her were kind of having a parallel journey?

**EMMA STONE:** Yeah, absolutely, in



many ways, and also Skeeter is learning about the truth and the reality of the everyday life of these women, as was I. I felt that we were learning in tandem about that because I had been educated on the most well-known stories on the civil rights-era, but not the day-to-day life of the ordinary woman experiencing this, and so getting to live in the South, and getting to play Skeeter really was so enriching for my life, not just as an actor, but as Emma.

**FTF:** Viola, Aibileen is such a rich and compelling character, but were there other considerations for you in accepting and going ahead with the film?

**VIOLA DAVIS:** No, that was the only consideration at the end of the day, there wasn't a lot of hesitancy. I remember playing a maid in *Far From Heaven*, I remember telling some friends, and I'm glad they didn't hold me to this, I said "I'm never playing a maid again, never", for many reasons, but then Aibileen came along. I remember getting these roles in television and they were always described the same way, always: "late '30s to mid-'40s, strong, sassy", and the last one I got, and I looked at it all night, because it said: "strong, sassy, police officer, mother of two, married, strong with no vulnerability, whatsoever" [laughs]. And so when Aibileen came along and I saw how multi-faceted and rich she was I thought it was a no-brainer to take it.

**FTF:** Emma touched on this, but what did it give you to shoot in Mississippi? It's obviously changed a great deal, but did you also get a sense that there are some parts of the state that haven't changed that much at all?

**OS:** Well I'm from the South, I'd venture to say that the amount of racism that is prevalent at this point in America would be on par with what is prevalent around the world. In Mississippi, as well as all Southern regions, that's definitely a part of our past, it's not anything that didn't play a part in making us grow as a nation, certainly as a people, but it definitely helped being there to bring the story to life, for

***"SO AS AN EXERCISE THAT DAY, JUST TO BE ABLE TO TALK TO THIS WOMAN WHO HAD PASSED AWAY, SHE [KATHRYN STOCKETT] STARTED WRITING SHORT STORIES IN DEMETRIE'S VOICE. JUST RAMBLING, GUESSING WHO HER FRIENDS WERE AND WHAT THEY WOULD TALK ABOUT, AND SHE COULDN'T STOP; FIVE YEARS LATER THAT BECAME THE HELP."***



me that's the case, anyway.

**FTF:** Tate, given that food is quite a major element in the film, in advance of shooting did you know that Jessica Chastain was a vegan, and that Bryce [Dallas Howard] was sugar and wheat intolerant as well?

**TT:** [laughs] Well first of all, Bryce changes every month, so she's not that way anymore. After we got back to LA, I saw her just going to town on some pie and cake, with a rib bone in her hand, and I'm like "what the hell?" and she says "well I'm not doing that anymore." "You should have been doing this last summer." But I did not know that about Jessica; after I cast the part I asked all the ladies to put on some weight, and then when I was told that Jessica was having trouble because she was vegan, I was like "oh, god," but she did it. That's a lot of seaweed isn't it, to gain weight?

**ES:** It was peanut butter and jelly sandwiches I thin.

**OS:** And sweet tea.

**FTF:** What happened to all that food on the tables?

**TT:** Oh it was eaten, oh gosh. Well our caterers were so fantastic, as was Martha Foose, she was our food stylist. She's a celebrity cook from Mississippi, from Greenwood actually, she always made a point to make extra because of the crew, people would be holding booms and they would start leaning in; "we're not through!" I'd have to shout.

**OS:** And you'd come in and start eating some of the food between shots...

**TT:** I had to make sure the actresses were eating the right food [laughs]. But yeah, there was extra, I ate a lot. I gained almost 40lbs in three months.

**FTF:** In researching the film, and making the film, what did you learn about the Civil Rights Movement that maybe shocked you, surprised you, that you didn't know already?

**OS:** I think it shocked my because I knew it but I didn't really process it, just how many Skeeters, in the form of young white men and women, who were actually involved in the Civil Rights Movement. I knew that it was

a struggle for African-Americans and people of colour, but then I realised that it was a struggle for the nation when I actually went back to do research, and saw how many young people the character Skeeter actually truthfully represents.

**VD:** There's certain things that just don't make it into the history books, you know when you get into a character, you're walking in their shoes for three and a half months, you're feeling what they feel when you go to work, when they come home. Being on the set in Minnie's home, the one bed that her kids got into, and the tea/bridge club scene that we shot for three weeks. I had no lines, I was just serving tea and picking up ashes all day, trying to pretend that I was invisible, because I was, those are the things that are not documented in history books, and that's how it affected human beings, the degradation. I think that was the biggest surprise for me, that I had somehow dismissed that in the past, or kind of minimalised it, that if I had lived there in that time I would have overcome it, that I wouldn't have felt that way, that I would have spoken up, but to actually live in that body, I could not imagine living that life, going through it everyday.

**TT:** For me, when I was researching the Jim Crow laws, which they were all rarely written down, often different across the many various states across the country, what was truly very telling was how much racism is driven by fear. Some of the laws on the books are so laughably ridiculous, there was one that schools for the blind can't have blacks and whites to go them together. But think about that, they're blind, and it just makes you laugh but it shows how as humans that we can be so ridiculously fearful, it's just absurd. I was just continually shocked. I implore you to go online and try to find them you, just won't believe some of the laws that were on the books.

**ES:** For me, everything really, I learned so much. I don't know if it's just generational, or educational, but it's tough to say that my generation just doesn't talk about it that much. It happened

in the past, time's gone by, you know, and when there's something dirty in our past we tend to sweep it under the rug because we want remember all the positive things from history, and all the great accomplishments, and all the wonderful times. Remember the fact that the Civil Rights Act passed, and it was a hard time, but now it's not; you don't learn so much about what actually happened, what actually changed, how far we've come in 50 years. Tate gave us this documentary series called *Eyes On The Prize* which I was seeing for the first time; six one-hour parts, talking about the 1960s in the South, during the Civil Rights Movement, and it was incredible. It was so enlightening and horrifying, and reading about the Jim Crow laws, which I had no idea existed, and really realising just how separate everything was, it was all new to me, and thank god I know it now. I think *Eyes On The Prize* should be required viewing in schools, because just to appreciate how far we've come has changed my whole life now. A difference of opinion and being open-minded, being able to hear people's stories in a much more open way, and realise why people are the way they are, because of their history.

**FTF:** Did you find it difficult reversing socially what you know and how you interact with each other? There's so much racism in the film that must be so alien, was it strange doing that on-set, as a character?

**OS:** Oh, absolutely, I mean the world in which we inhabit, to live with a white man who just happens to be one of my best friends, and then to go on a set and have to be in the 1960s and not trust him because he's white, and not trust her [Emma Stone] sweet little face right here, because she was white, you know, it made it a very dark place for me. And what was wonderful coming out of that darkness was that I felt so embraced by this group of people and that we all cared and carried the burden. For that really was the hardest thing to do, was to be in that mindset. *The Help* hits cinemas across the UK on October 26th



INTERVIEW WITH

***BETHANY  
HAMILTON***

SUBJECT OF *SOUL SURFER*

WORDS BY ANDREW SIMPSON



**S**oul Surfer tells the incredible true story of Bethany Hamilton. A young girl from Hawaii obsessed with surfing, she was attacked by a shark in 2003 while on the board at the age of 13. Losing an arm, she returned to the water less than one month later to pursue, and realise, her goal of becoming a professional surfer. Having already co-written a bestselling book based on her experiences, *Soul Surfer* stars Anna Sophia Robb (*Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*) as Bethany, and Hollywood stars Dennis Quaid and Helen Hunt as her supportive parents, in an inspirational story underpinned with Hamilton's Christian faith. The film has already been a huge hit overseas, grossing \$43 million at the US box office. In person, Hamilton is a firm believer in the power of her own story, and remarkably bubbly and well adjusted considering the horrific accident that she has suffered.

**FAN THE FIRE:** How long has it taken for *Soul Surfer* to get made?

**BETHANY HAMILTON:** Well the idea has been there since the documentary [2007's *Heart Of A Soul Surfer*] and my manager is the guy, because if it wasn't for him it wouldn't have happened. He was persistent, and we kept pitching it. It wasn't really coming together, and then 2 years ago we met Sean McNamara, the director of the film. I instantly loved him, because he was just a really honest, good guy, and he wanted to make an honest, good film.

**FTF:** How did you feel about Anna Sophia Robb playing you?

**BH:** How she ended up getting the role was that I had seen her in several films, like *Bridge To Terabithia* and *Willy Wonka And The Chocolate Factory*, and a couple of others, and really enjoyed her performances, thinking she could be right for the part. So we suggested her and she ended up getting it. She

came out to Hawaii and me surf coach and I taught her how to surf, and just got her comfortable in the ocean and helped make it look like she knew what she was doing on a surfboard. We've become really good friends, and I think getting to know me helped her play the role better.

**FTF:** So does that mean you've had a lot of creative control, besides it being about you and being based on the book you wrote on your experiences?

**BH:** My brothers were working on set every day. We all have the same voice, and we think similarly, so if any one of us was always on set to give advice. We were involved every single day, even with writing the script.

**FTF:** You did a lot of the actual surfing in the movie too didn't you?

**BH:** I did a lot of the stunt surfing, all the stuff after Bethany loses her arm is me.

**FTF:** Is there anything in particular you wanted to be included that didn't make it?

**BH:** Not really, we really did get everything that really matters to us into the film. Overall I was really happy with how the film turned out, because you never know what's going to happen when you combine Hollywood and a true story. Surfing is a really hard thing to portray, and then there's my faith, so the odds of it turning out good are kind of low! But my family and I are so thrilled with the finished film.

**FTF:** How close does a biopic need to be to the reality of what happened?

**BH:** What I've learned through this is that making movies isn't about making things exactly the same, but capturing the emotions and struggles, and also the good stuff we went through and putting that on screen.

**FTF:** Is there anything in the film that is fictional then?

**BH:** The only things that weren't true

were the boyfriend character, but I like what he brought to the film because it shows that somebody is going to love me. A lot of girls believe lies that aren't true, and so I think it's cool to be able to encourage girls in that. The arch rival, she's an added character, but in real life you have that, so I didn't mind her inclusion. All the other scenes are based on something.

**FTF:** In the film you're not portrayed as being afraid to get back in the water after the attack. Is that really how it happened?

**BH:** I was more scared of losing surfing than sharks, because shark attacks are so rare. It's not like every surfer out there is thinking 'Oh God I'm going to be attacked by a shark today!' People that drive cars don't think 'Oh God am I going to get in an accident two blocks from now?'

**FTF:** There was a documentary before the feature film. How does it compare?

**BH:** The documentary is more faith-based and detailed, I would say, They have their differences. This is a Hollywood feature film, so it's different but more people will see it. You get to grow with Bethany, you see her growing up and her talent for surfing.

**FTF:** Faith is a very important part of that story isn't it?

**BH:** My faith in God has been there since before I can remember, and it's something that's even more important to me that surfing. It's not necessarily the same for other people, and I don't try to push it on them, but I can see how God has taken my life and turned it into something beautiful that it might not have been if I didn't trust in him.

**FTF:** What impact has all this had on your life?

**BH:** Well the book did really well and the movie has done much better than we expected, in the US at least! It definitely changes your life when you have that kind of stuff happen, and it's been cool to see how it's impacting people of all different ages, and the different stories about what people have gone through and how it's encouraged them. *Soul Surfer* is out on DVD and Blu-ray ♣

**“THE ODDS ARE KINDA LOW”**

INTERVIEW WITH

**NICOLAS  
WINDING  
REEF**

DIRECTOR OF *DRIVE*

WORDS BY ANDREW SIMPSON



Based on the book by James Sallis, this supremely cool, unexpected take on the 1970s crime thriller stars Ryan Gosling as a character known only as Driver. A Hollywood stuntman moonlighting as a getaway driver for LA's criminal underworld, Gosling's character is cool and unruffled to the point of impenetrability, at least until he falls for his neighbour Irene (Carey Mulligan), a devotion that leads him to try and help her husband escape the wrath of the mob, with disastrous results. Its central character is surrounded by a handful of bravura supporting turns from the likes of Ron Perlman and particularly Albert Brooks, whose performance as a blade wielding mob boss is already attracting Oscar talk. *Drive* is so successful because of the way it rebuilds familiar elements into something fresh. Unlike Quentin Tarantino's *Death Proof* it recalls classic influences – like early Michael Mann and Walter Hill's *The Driver* – without resorting to pastiche. Going places stylistically and thematically that remain constantly surprising, it is often shocking in its brutal violence. It is a natural progression for Nicolas

Winding Refn, the Danish director who from the brutal criminality of the *Pusher* trilogy to the Norse horror-fantasy of *Valhalla Rising* has made a habit of creating fierce, distinctive takes on genre films.

Refn's inventive biopic *Bronson* featured a breakout performance from rising star Tom Hardy, but while *Drive* may similarly propel Gosling onto the A-List, the filmmaker is similarly making the step up. Winner of the best director prize at Cannes earlier this year, the film has put Refn in a position to develop further Hollywood projects with Gosling, including a big-budget remake of the 1970s science-fiction classic *Logan's Run*. But one senses that this fascinating, off-kilter director is unlikely to change his personal, unusual approach to cinema anytime soon.

**FAN THE FIRE:** How closely did you develop the film alongside Gosling?

**NICOLAS WINDING REFN:** Well I think that the way it all started was that Ryan called me up and asked if I wanted to do a movie with him. We met and it was a very interesting meeting because it led to us realising

that we could actually work together. We had very telekinetic behaviour together. The idea of doing movie about a stuntman was interesting, and I had an idea about a guy who drives around at night listening to pop music, and those aspects evolved until we could actually make the movie *Drive*. So once you have that emotional connection with a leading actor, it becomes very easy to communicate in much the same way as you conjure alter egos, and the film becomes very much a collaboration between the two of us going down this road. Also because I shoot my films in chronological order it continues to build, and change and alter itself all the way through.

**FTF:** One of the unexpected pleasures of *Drive* is its soundtrack, featuring the likes of Kavinsky as opposed to the more cold, gritty sounds that you would expect from a film in this genre. What was the process behind that?

**NWR:** Well I wanted that Europop feel, which was very feminine and from the early '80s, to contrast with the masculinity of the stunt-world, this car-world. I had this idea of Kraftwerk, and I would listen to Kraftwerk a lot because it gives me ideas as I don't do drugs anymore. I'm fetishistic person, so I essentially make up images that I would like to see in a movie, and that's also one of the reasons why I shoot in chronological order, so that it constantly evolves within me to what it ends up being. I chose some of these pop songs, one of them being Kavinsky, because it was a great way to define the movie I felt. And then Cliff Martinez, the composer, emulated the sound of these songs with his actual score for the movie.

**FTF:** How important were the classic 1970s genre films that *Drive* instantly recalls, films like Walter Hill's *The Driver*?

**NWR:** No, I used a lot of *Grimms' Fairy Tales* as my main source for looking at was really important to me. But I believe that Sallis had seen *The Driver* and that it inspired him to write the novel. So there's an indirect influence, ➔

**“I USED A LOT OF GRIMMS’ FAIRY TALES AS MY MAIN SOURCE FOR LOOKING AT WAS REALLY IMPORTANT TO ME.”**





and I'm a huge admirer of Walter Hill, it kind of went hand in hand in the end.

**FTF:** The film has a very tactile feel in the way it captures the feel of driving around LA, and in the physicality of the violence, which is again almost fetishistic isn't it?

**NWR:** Well I don't analyse my own

stuff because I've always afraid that if I analyse it I will find faults and get obsessive, and I'll start changing it and it will become something completely different from what it should be. I learn to make films purely on instinct, so I can always say it's all about what I would like to see, and I can leave the rest to the experts.

**FTF:** The film features moments of

calm, and even tenderness, that are broken suddenly by explosive violence. It's very jolting at times. Was that important?

**NWR:** It's not that it was important, it was a natural evolution. It was a great way to play myself through Ryan.

**FTF:** What do you think the supporting actors brought to the film alongside Ryan Gosling?

**NWR:** Supporting casts are equally as important as the lead because they are the ones who support the lead, and if they are not good it brings everything down. What's good about Ryan is that as an actor he's so understanding of the other actors and what they need to help them, and we were part of their process as well so it was very collaborative from everybody involved, and it became almost like a community. We were almost always staying at my house in LA, and that was where it was created out of. We even cut the movie at my house.

**FTF:** That is especially the case with Albert Brooks, who plays completely against type as a knife wielding criminal boss. Ron Perlman, Christina Hendricks and *Breaking Bad*'s Bryan Cranston are also fantastic. How did they all end up working on the film?

**NWR:** Albert Brooks I always wanted, so I went for him right away, and he was interested. I met with him and he was a very specific man, and that's when I came up with his whole knife fetish. So again it was a collaboration between me and Albert. Ron Perlman put in a call and asked if he could be in the movie. So did Christina Hendricks and Carey Mulligan. Bryan Cranston I had to really pursue, because Brian, with *Breaking Bad*, has a lot of choices. I would have to do some extra wooing but I was able to get him onto the movie, and again I said 'what would you like to do with this character,' really creating him from scratch. If you've got good actors, use them. Take advantage of their need and their willingness to be a part of it. That's what directing is all about, inspiring everybody else to give their best.

*Drive is in cinemas now*



**“WHAT’S GOOD ABOUT RYAN IS THAT AS AN ACTOR HE’S SO UNDERSTANDING OF THE OTHER ACTORS AND WHAT THEY NEED TO HELP THEM, AND WE WERE PART OF THEIR PROCESS AS WELL SO IT WAS VERY COLLABORATIVE FROM EVERYBODY INVOLVED, AND IT BECAME ALMOST LIKE A COMMUNITY.”**

# THE ADVENTURES OF TINTIN

**DIRECTED BY STEVEN SPIELBERG STARRING JAMIE BELL, SIMON PEGG, DANIEL CRAIG, ANDY SERKIS, NICK FROST, TOBY JONES, TONY CURRAN & MACKENZIE CROOK**

**RELEASED OCTOBER 26 (UK) DECEMBER 21 (USA)**

At long last the big screen, motion-captured iteration of Tintin, from director-producer superteam Steven Spielberg and Peter Jackson, is with us. And who better to capture the essence of Hergé's genial adventures than the combined directors of *Indiana Jones* and *Lord Of The Rings*? This film, full title *The Adventures Of Tintin: The Secret Of The Unicorn*, draws together three of the original Tintin stories and sets up (box office permitting) a Peter Jackson-directed sequel.

It hardly seems worth worrying about the box office credentials of this film. It will do very well, and the sequel will almost certainly follow. Thankfully, Spielberg's opening foray into the timeless world of Hergé's amiable hero does enough to whet our appetite for a second, even if it's far from perfect.

We are introduced to our iconic young journalist hero in a warm, charming opening which throws in a delightful nod to the source material. At the same time we acquaint ourselves with the all-important and much-discussed visuals, which are realistic but subtly stylised. More on those in a moment.

Tintin finds a model ship on a market stall and immediately attracts the interest of several suspicious individuals. He's warned that ownership of the diminutive vessel will put his life in danger, but accompanied by his faithful dog Snowy, Tintin sets out to unravel the secret of the ship, even if he doesn't understand quite how badly it is desired by unseen parties. From here, the mystery balloons into an adventure narrative as the pace picks up.

The general quality of the visuals is impressive. Most of the motion-captured character movements are very well done, and the lip-syncing is generally solid. Character designs are strong, too, and bring Hergé's deceptively simple drawings to life. Tintin himself was always a relatively blank canvas visually speaking, and thankfully he is designed here with just enough life to make him pleasant company. Jamie Bell's vocal performance aids the animators in this regard, instilling him with just the right amount of boyish enthusiasm. Other memorable characters such as Captain Haddock (mo-cap veteran Andy Serkis) and Thompson and Thomson (played by Simon Pegg and Nick Frost) are brought to life with similarly effective charm. The latter two are present mainly for comic relief (as in the original stories), while Haddock plays a more central role in the narrative, Andy Serkis growling his drunken Scottish accent effectively.

This is Steven Spielberg's first fully-animated picture, and he clearly enjoyed the freedoms the medium can bring. He frequently lets loose with his digital toy box, conjuring grandiose fades and cutaways that work through their sheer exuberance. At times it feels like he had almost too much fun playing, however, and forgot to tighten things up. The film feels undisciplined at times, bookending interesting narrative scenes with fantastical ac-

tion. A scene in a North African town erupts into an expansive and thrilling, but also convoluted and dizzying, action spectacle. In fact, the film is quite heavy on action, a little more than was perhaps need-

ed (there are shades of *Indiana Jones* at times), and the pace could have been slowed to make room for more character moments. When Spielberg cuts loose it can be to thrilling effect (an intercut sequence flitting between a desert and a sea battle is a stand-

out) but it can also draw less welcome results. The final action set-piece at a dock is disappointing, and it steers the story to a slightly underwhelming conclusion.

Similarly, the visuals are occasionally inconsistent. Some scenes (particularly those set in the North African palace) look comparatively unfinished compared to those around them. Another month in post- could have helped those scenes reach the same high standards as the rest. While the 3-D is passable, managing not to dilute the lovely colour palette too much, but it adds very little to the spectacle.

On occasion the script lumbers Jamie Bell with a little too much Snowy-directed rhetoric. This may be in keeping with the comics, but what works on the page doesn't quite translate to the screen. That is a minor quibble, though, and in general the script is tight, the performances are strong, and most of the comic beats hit successfully. The ending, which introduces the story for the sequel, isn't particularly exciting. It feels like an unnecessary extension of this film's self-contained narrative, but the details of the story told in the original comics have faded from my mind, and the next film will hopefully combine the right source material to create a ripping yarn.

Spielberg has done a good job of setting up Tintin's out-of-time universe for Peter Jackson to attempt to

better him in a couple of years' time. This film has its flaws, but the prospect of a sequel is one that should be warmly received. A tighter focus on the investigative aspects of the story, some more character

beats, and maybe even female characters, should help Jackson create a more rounded follow-up, but this is worth the price of entry for a family adventure and to spend some time with some a lovable cast of characters. **MR**

★★★★★

**SPIELBERG HAS DONE A GOOD JOB OF SETTING UP TINTIN'S OUT-OF-TIME UNIVERSE**







# DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE DARK

**DIRECTED BY TROY NIXEY STARRING BAILEE MADISON, GUY PEARCE, KATIE HOLMES, ALAN DALE, JACK THOMPSON, JULIA BLAKE, GARRY McDONALD & NICHOLAS BELL**

**RELEASED OUT NOW**

Guillermo Del Toro is a busy man. While 2008's *Hellboy 2: The Golden Army* was his last directorial effort, and with *Pacific Rim*, his next feature behind the camera, not due for release for another two years, he'll have produced, or executive-produced, a whopping 10 films in between, earning himself the reputation as one of the most talented filmmakers in the industry along the way.

*Don't Be Afraid Of The Dark*, a remake of a 1973 made-for-TV movie of the same name, and despite relatively disappointing business in the States – thanks to a much delayed release as producers Miramax were in the process of being sold by Disney – still arrives with the potential to be one of the best horror features of the year.

When young Sally Hirst (Madi-

son) goes to live with her father, Alex (Pearce), as he and girlfriend Kim (Holmes) restore and renovate an old manor and estate, while she's certainly not excited to find herself in new surroundings, she still didn't expect the torrid time she experiences soon after unpacking her bags. As a prologue forewarns, there's something fearsome lurking in the basement, and when Sally inquisitively uncovers its secret doorway, boarded up by previous owners, released are a terrifying species of goblin that won't stop until they get what they want, which quite worryingly, is her teeth.

Making excellent use of a more older-themed score, it's important to point out up front that *Don't Be Afraid Of The Dark* is all-encapsulatingly scary, but not perhaps in the way you might have expected. Moving swiftly away from its title, after what's lurking in the cellar is revealed very early in the film, it instead strains your nerves with more full-on, obvious terror, instead of the tension and suspense of what you don't see. Against all odds, however, this proves just as effective.

The narrative and tone are both deeply chilling, and while playing everything out in a much more obvious fashion means it won't stay with you quite as long as other similarly effective horrors may, for the 99 minutes

in a darkened room, good luck staying unnerved.

While shooting, director Troy Nixey thought they could put it together as a PG-13 without compromising on the scares, but rightly it was rated-R, and this is one of the scariest films you'll see all year.

As you'd expect with Del Toro involved, there's wonderful character design on the goblins, although it's the young lead that gives the film much of its realism. With an assured Guy Pearce at her side, Bailee Madison steals the show, portraying terror and a wealth of other emotions with a confidence far beyond her years. On the flipside Katie Holmes almost undoes such good work with a terrible performance, frustrating as her character is intended to grow more and more influential throughout the movie.

Though a severe lack of an emotional bond to the characters ultimately holds the film back – though it is attempted, none of the three leads complete anything close to an involving character arc – *Don't Be Afraid Of The Dark* is another chilling horror produced under the wing of Guillermo Del Toro. While this isn't the perfect film yet, it marks Troy Nixey out too, as a talented director to watch out for in the future. **SB**

★★★★★





# WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT KEVIN

**DIRECTED BY** LYNNE RAMSAY **STARRING** TILDA SWINTON, EZRA MILLER, JOHN C. REILLY, URSULA PARKER, ASHLEY GERASIMOVICH, SIOBHAN FALLON & ALEX MANETTE

**RELEASED** OCTOBER 21 (UK) DECEMBER 2 (USA)

Based on the critically-acclaimed book by Lionel Shriver, *We Need To Talk About Kevin* certainly isn't a walk in the park but give it the chance to develop and the film soon blossoms into a masterful and involving feature.

Focusing on the relationship between a mother (Swinton) and her son (Miller, Newell, Duer), as she recaps his life leading up to a tragedy at his

hands in the modern day, *We Need To Talk About Kevin* takes on a difficult story and tells it in a way that produces absorbing, if not loveable, characters.

Harbouring a very unforgiving tone, Lynne Ramsay's third feature is a tough watch, but follows through on a subject when it could so easily have backed down; impressively daring and confident work of the director.

Despite chopping back and forth, the narrative never feels disjointed and you certainly shouldn't get lost along the way. The mother is always the sticking point on the timeline, so it's easy to follow in that regard, subtly teasing snippets of the fictional high school massacre along the way.

It's hugely impressive that with no redemption in sight, you'll still remain glued to the screen until the bitter end, drawing great sympathy for the mother as she fails to ever develop a real bond with her son. The three

Kevins, from toddler to teen, and of course, Tilda Swinton, give the film an utter believability when over-the-top performances could have so easily been its undoing. Swinton's Eva is wonderfully ground down by Kevin in his early years, while post-tragedy, she just about manages to hold it together in the face of a torrent of ill will from the public, and still, her son. John C. Reilly struggles to give any real weight to the father figure, but this was always going to be about the mother-son relationship and he doesn't play a huge part in the story.

Do I have an urge to ever really think about, or see, the film again? Probably not, but then some great movies are like that, and with the awards season just around the corner, and *We Need To Talk About Kevin* a near shoe-in for nominations, I might not have a choice. **SB**

★★★★★



# CONTAGION

**DIRECTED BY** STEVEN SODERBERGH **STARRING** MATT DAMON, LAURENCE FISHBURNE, JUDE LAW, GWYNETH PALTROW, KATE WINSLET & MARION COTILLARD

**RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) OCTOBER 21 (UK)**

The outbreak of a new animal-born virus strain is nothing new in a world that recently battled against the H1N1 pandemic, but it doesn't mean the idea isn't still terrifying.

When a mysterious new disease starts to spread across the planet, first breaking out in Hong Kong, then quickly America, Europe and wider Asia, it's fair to say society breaks into panic; *Contagion* tells that story from perspectives right across the spectrum.

One of the first afflicted when away on business, Beth Emhoff (Pal-

trow) brings the disease back home, putting her family (Damon, Kane) and neighbours at risk; Dr. Ellis Cheever (Fishburne) and Dr. Erin Meers (Winslet) are doing their best to find out just what the virus is and task scientists (Ehle, Martin) to produce a vaccine; World Health Organization epidemiologist, Dr. Leonora Orantes (Cotillard) travels to Hong Kong on a fact-finding mission; and blogger Alan Krumwiede makes a name for himself denouncing the advice and guidelines passed down by the government.

*Contagion* is a multi-veined story and director Steven Soderbergh has produced a very tightly helmed picture and a narrative that somehow billows on without ever feeling lost. The tone and aesthetic of the film, however, aren't quite so cohesive.

Caught between outbreak thriller and political drama, in the end *Contagion* predictably falls somewhere awk-

wardly in the middle. The visual style, soundtrack and acting draw to the former, but the narrative, pacing and general mood are much closer to the latter. In the end it feels a little like a Fincher wannabee, rather than boasting its own identity in itself.

It's to the actors' and screenwriter Scott Z. Burns' credit therefore that come the conclusion, *Contagion* still comes out on the right side of a middling score. As the A-List cast make the film so effortless, thanks to a super-realistic edge and scientifically accurate plot details, it's easy to get wrapped up in the events. *Contagion* is mature and intelligent without delving so deep it'll loose you, and considering the wealth of big name stars, its \$60m budget should be deemed relatively low, so to span to globe in such a way, with some big sets along the way, the end result is impressive use of the money. **SB**

★★★★★





# THE AWAKENING

**DIRECTED BY** NICK MURPHY **STARRING** REBECCA HALL, DOMINIC WEST, IMELDA STAUNTON, LUCY COHU, JOHN SHRAPNEL, DIANA KENT, RICHARD DURDEN & ALFIE FIELD

**RELEASED** NOVEMBER 11 (UK) TBC (USA)

This low-budget chiller from Nick Murphy represents his first foray into feature filmmaking (having cut his teeth on TV) and stands its ground admirably within a cluttered genre. In telling the story of Florence Cathcart (Rebecca Hall), a professional debunker of mystery in post-war England, Murphy exercises just the right amount of control over his subject matter to ensure that its more over-familiar characteristics do not hamper its effectiveness.

Florence, we understand, is no ordinary 1920s woman. The film opens with her infiltrating and exposing a hoax ceremony purporting to allow contact with the dead, establishing her as a determined woman, whose exact motivations are not immediately clear. After reluctantly taking on a job at a remote boarding school where a child has recently died, Florence is greeted on the steps of the isolated institution by Maud (a pleasingly restrained Imelda Staunton) who declares that she has “never met an educated woman.” Florence is certainly smart – setting up her old-fashioned ghost-hunting

equipment around the house and mechanically explaining its purpose; she behaves rather like a wisp-chasing Sherlock Holmes and at times the film feels like a detective story.

Florence is introduced to the history of the institution through Maud and Robert Mallory, a war veteran teacher played by Dominic West. Shortly, the boys who live in the school are sent home to their parents for the holidays, with the exception of Tom (Isaac Hempstead Wright), whose parents live in India. With the huge school left almost empty, Florence is free to figure out whatever might be going on and, in the tradition of these films, perhaps come to terms with some inner demons as well.

This is a taut, atmospheric piece borrowing from a number of genres. It’s a period horror ostensibly, but plays out more like a supernatural detective story. That said, there is tension at times, much of which is well created by Murphy, even if it lifts heavily from well-established genre archetypes. There’s plenty of solitary wandering around the old house, with glimpses of this or that seen moving at the edge of the frame, creepy supporting characters with unknown motives and of course a few jump scares here and there. The film constantly battles with the derivative nature of much of its narrative; it’s likable and well played, but so very familiar, even down to some scenes which could be lifted from

other films. But clichés aside, Murphy delivers some effective chills. A recurring dollhouse motif is used well on a couple of occasions, and there are one or two jumps that will catch even the most avid horror aficionados off-guard.

Rebecca Hall does charming work in the lead role, much of which requires her to be silent and alone, and anchors the narrative well. After a number of good performances in recent years, Hall is beginning to stand out among her generation of British actresses. The supporting performances are good too, and (with the exception of one disappointingly underwritten character) pleasantly subtle.

As things move towards the conclusion, it begins to look as if the film may trip over its own feet when the inevitable revelations start to unravel, but in actual fact it ties up most of its loose ends satisfactorily. Again, the ending is too reminiscent of other works to be truly outstanding or evocative, but it works in the context of the narrative and it’s handled well. The film leaves us with a nice final idea, too, one which suggests a perpetuation of a larger problem.

In the end, Murphy’s film is a well-handled and likable ghost story, revolving around a good performance by Hall and, while it is not a stand out in its genre, it overcomes the odd dose of over-familiarity with confident filmmaking and some technical flair. **MR**

★★★★★



# 50/50

**DIRECTED BY** JONATHAN LEVINE **STARRING** JOSEPH GORDON-LEVITT, SETH ROGEN, ANNA KENDRICK, BRYCE DALLAS HOWARD, ANJELICA HUSTON & PHILIP BAKER HALL

**RELEASED** OUT NOW (USA) NOVEMBER 25 (UK)

Swapping out the usual relationship tangle for a cancer-centric plot, *50/50* feels like this year's *(500) Days Of Summer*. Not solely because of another starring role for Joseph Gordon-Levitt (though he is excellent again), *50/50* also shares the same, and excellently told, bittersweet yet uplifting tone and story, which given that *(500) Days* was one of our favourite films of 2009, bodes pretty well for this Jonathan Levine-directed effort.

When 27-year-old Adam (Gordon-Levitt) is quite suddenly diagnosed with cancer, it expectedly takes over his life, though while he finds support from best friend Kyle (Rogen), who also uses Adam's life-threatening con-

dition to get them both laid – a method of cheering him up, Kyle claims – his girlfriend exits the scene, unable to stay faithful and deal with the news. With that void left by ex-girlfriend Rachael (Howard), worrying mother Dianne (Huston) attempts to pick up the slack, but it's really therapist Katie (Kendrick) with whom Adam finds most solace, and starts to form a much stronger bond than either of them had previously expected.

Based on the life of screenwriter Will Reiser, as his first feature it's a remarkable effort, himself diagnosed six years ago with a tumour in his spine. The film possesses a poignant tone; at times it can be serious in nature but it always comes back around to a really endearing buddy comedy.

The moments of real emotion are played off nicely against a very on-form Seth Rogen, whose bratishness finds the perfect level, allowing *50/50* to hold weight yet still feel jovial. It's the same again from him but it works just as well as ever. Like the rest of the film, he gives a lot of laughs, some ob-

vious, but all with perfect delivery.

James McAvoy was originally set to star in the leading role but I'm delighted it was Gordon-Levitt who instead fills Adam's boots; the quickly-ascending talent is wonderful, perfectly embodying how you'd imagine anyone in his position to react. In one scene in particular (in the car) you feel for him much more than you'd ever expect in this sort of film, as Gordon-Levitt balances the flip-flop tone perfectly. He delivers a performance that intentionally isn't too overpowering but still embodies the weight it so crucially needs.

While *50/50* doesn't offer anything too original in terms of style, how effortlessly the film flows is great credit to director Jonathan Levine. The narrative feels very snappy as the film plays the emotional scenes out as it needs without lingering needlessly elsewhere, helping to balance the mixture of out-right comedy and what was always going to be a more sombre subject, in cancer. **SB**

★★★★★





# ABDUCTION

**DIRECTED BY** JOHN SINGLETON **STARRING** TAYLOR LAUTNER, LILY COLLINS, ALFRED MOLINA, JASON ISAACS, MARIA BELLO, SIGOURNEY WEAVER & MICHAEL NYQVIST

**RELEASED** OUT NOW

“ab-duc-tion, *noun*. The leading away of a minor under the age of sixteen, without the consent of the parent or guardian; and the forcible carrying off of any one above that age.” At not a single point in this movie is anyone abducted.

Feeling like a Disney version of *The Fugitive*, *Abduction* is a chase movie that not for a single second treats anyone to the act of its title, but that’s the least of its worries. In fact, just to talk of this Taylor Lautner-vehicle in the same breath as Harrison Ford’s classic gives it far too much credit, *Abduction*

is a cheap knock-off, only it cost a lot of money too.

When Nathan Harper sees his picture on a missing persons website, he’s understandably confused, though after calling up the site’s helpline, instead of receiving information about his real past, is soon embroiled in a cross-country chase, as enemies of his real father attempt to hunt him down to use as collateral to reclaim illicit data stolen from their grasp.

There could have been enough in the basic plot for director John Singleton to base an entertaining thrill-ride around, but chronically cheesy sequences and telegraphed plot twists, the character created by Lautner and truly horrendous dialogue all really let the film down.

For you to root for Lautner’s Nathan Harper, you first have to like him, but his character is nothing short of womanising, teenage party boy and I’d have much rather he’d died in the very

first scene. The character actors (Maria Bello, Alfred Molina, Jason Isaacs, Michael Nyqvist, Sigourney Weaver) placed around him to pad out the film do much better, but their roles are all so completely bit-part they can’t hide the chronic problems at its core, and against such a hapless performance in the main role, come across as, if anything, too realistic.

Playing Lautner’s love interest, Lily Collins she does everything asked of her; hopefully she has much more to work in the Tarsem Singh’s forthcoming *Snow White* update.

You might see the torrent of bad reviews and think *Abduction* can’t be that bad, but trust me, it is. It’s a Taylor Lautner-vehicle in the strongest of senses; the whole film relies on him, and he lets it down badly. *Abduction* collapses with his terrible performance and there isn’t a single redeeming feature the whole film. **SB**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★



# TYRANNOSAUR

**DIRECTED BY** PADDY CONSIDINE **STARRING** PETER MULLAN, OLIVIA COLMAN, EDDIE MARSAN, PAUL POPPLEWELL, NED DENNEHY, SAMUEL BOTTOMLEY & SALLY CARHAN

**RELEASED** OUT NOW (UK) TBC (USA)

Paddy Considine's directorial debut is another example of the power of performances to re-energise familiar concepts. Its gritty realism can make it hard-going at times, but *Tyrannosaur* marks Considine out as a talent to look out for not just in front of the camera, but behind it as well.

In telling the story of Joseph, an ageing widower brimming with uncontrollable rage, and the genesis of his unlikely connection with Christian shop-owner Hannah, Considine draws two strong performances from his leads. Peter Mullan, as Joseph, is a coiled spring of frustration; in a prologue, he literally kicks out at life. We see his daily routine summed up in a few early scenes, tormenting cashiers with racial abuse, drinking solitary pints in daytime bars. At first, this

setup seems a little too brusque, inviting us to see both sides of Joseph's character – he's a good man on the inside – very quickly. It irks a little, but the feeling evaporates pleasingly as Considine moves things along.

Enter Hannah, and a disarmingly effective performance by Olivia Colman (best known as Sophie from TV series *Peep Show*). She is kind, middle-class, well off; Joseph finds himself in her store and cannot resist the temptation to taunt her and her faith. In time, we find that appearances can be deceiving; she, just like him, has her secrets. Eddie Marsan as her husband, despite little screen time, terrifies.

Considine wrote as well as directed *Tyrannosaur*, and he shows a flair for pacing. The film is just the right length at an hour and a half. Meanwhile, the script is effective and never preachy. Joseph's railing against life is embittered occasionally to the point of farce, but that, I think, is intentional. The film isn't afraid to give him some cracking one liners, and to find bleak laughs amidst the poverty of these people's lives. Ned Dennehy, as a drunken friend of Joseph's, gets a character introduction that is funny

and shocking. Throughout, there is a very real sense of the self-perpetuating cycle of poverty, both in body and mind; how can Joseph turn his life around when he lives in a broken-down estate filled such with angry souls? The rain and the concrete seem to prevent his release. That said, Considine shows us the wealthier side of town, and that has its problems too.

The drama is set to a very well-chosen score and the original music is used at just the right times. Considine isn't afraid to show brutality but the violence of the film is mostly emotional violence; we don't necessarily see, but we *feel*. The potty-mouthed script, meanwhile, may be off-putting to some, but the film sees no reason to shy away from reality.

Considine has made an assured, well-paced debut film with two very strong lead performances that compliment each other well. It's bleak at times, but manages not to feel depressing; it believes in people more than it believes in the cruelty of unfortunate circumstances or character defects. The film can feel a little over-familiar but this is a confident first feature. **MR**

★★★★★





# REAL STEEL

**DIRECTED BY SHAWN LEVY STARRING HUGH JACKMAN, DAKOTA GOYO, EVANGELINE LILLY, ANTHONY MACKIE, KEVIN DURAND, HOPE DAVIS & JAMES REBHORN**

**RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) OCTOBER 14 (UK)**

Many people understandably have little tolerance for watching others play computer games. After all, they're not directly involved. Watching somebody else interact with something fun does not necessarily mean that their sense of entertainment will survive the transition to an uninvolved third party.

This is an issue in Shawn Levy's (loose) adaptation of *Steel*, a Richard Matheson short story. In the near future, regular human-on-human boxing has been replaced by 'Real Steel', a form of boxing in which humans control robot competitors from the sidelines while their avatars wail on each other in metallic smackdowns. Audiences, apparently, just got too bored of seeing plain old humans beating each other senseless.

Washed up ex-boxer and now robot-operator/manager Charlie Kenton (Hugh Jackman) bitterly recounts this (largely unbelievable) back story to his estranged son Max (Dakota Goyo) as the two of them hunt for spare parts in an apocalyptic waste disposal facility. They've been thrown together against their wishes; Charlie has agreed to endure his son's company for a couple of months while his rich sister-in-law, who actually wants to look after the boy, goes on holiday with her husband, who doesn't. The latter has covertly

agreed a deal with Charlie that if he keeps the kid out of his hair for a couple of months, he'll give him \$100,000. That money should get Charlie back in the robot battling game after the latest in a string of expensive failures.

At said waste facility, Max stumbles upon an unusual, apparently out-of-date robot which he believes can be a star. At first, Charlie doesn't share his enthusiasm, but it quickly becomes apparent they have something special on their hands. The new robot features an apparently rare 'shadow function' which allows it to mimic the movements of its controller. Hence, there is an opportunity for Charlie to dig out his old boxing skills by programming the thing to move like a good old fashioned human boxer. Cue a journey of familial bonding in which the reluctant father and son are forced to work together to form a winning partnership.

The film is a decidedly mixed bag. As has already been mentioned, the robot bouts themselves (and there are a fair few) suffer from a lack of direct interest. Most of the robots we see getting trashed are bland avatars; nothing more than punch fodder. They're not characters, they're toys, and even Atom – Max's robot of choice – despite being given a hint of characterisation, evokes no emotional reaction when he gets pummelled. The nature of the 'sport' means that we get lots of footage of people holding remote controls, looking up at their avatars in the ring, shouting instructions and desperately hammering unseen buttons. This grows thin very quickly. They look like they're having much more fun than we are. By the time we reach the film's finale – a long robot duel interspersed

by jarring slow-mo reaction shots – the whole thing has lost its interest. At one point Jackman is forced to 'shadow box' at the side of the ring, leading to unintentionally hilarious shots of him standing on his own, grinning and punching thin air. At other times, the mechanics of just how the humans actually control their robots is baffling and nonsensical.

Jackman gives a thoroughly unremarkable performance as Charlie, one that desperately calls out for the charisma we know he is capable of bringing; he shouts his way through half of his scenes. Goyo is decent, carrying the film confidently, and despite the fact that his character develops an irritatingly over-confident attitude at times, some of his moments alone with Atom are genuinely touching. One scene in particular, in which Max uses his own movements to encourage the robot to pick him up, is nicely done. Charlie's love interest is supplied by Evangeline Lilly, who does her best in a role which is intermittently sidelined. Product placement routinely distracts, while the film's bombastic licensed soundtrack is a little overdone, occasionally giving the impression that we're watching an over-produced, corporate-sponsored music video.

At least the film understands that the human characters are the important ones, not the faceless robots, and it chooses – just about – to focus on that aspect. But in the end, the script doesn't do enough with the father-son relationship element to keep us involved, and the CGI robot fights aren't sufficiently exciting to make us care about the rest. **MR**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★



# TINKER, TAILOR, SOLDIER, SPY

**DIRECTED BY** TOMAS ALFREDSON **STARRING** GARY OLDMAN, COLIN FIRTH, TOM HARDY, JOHN HURT, TOBY JONES, MARK STRONG, BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH & CIARÁN HINDS

**RELEASED** OUT NOW (UK) DECEMBER 9 (USA)

In converting John le Carré's labyrinthine spy novel to the big screen, Swedish director Tomas Alfredson has achieved much. His previous film – the carefully constructed, stark horror drama *Let the Right One In* – garnered him a lot of international attention, and this, his first English-language feature, proves that attention was warranted.

His *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* is a coiled, terse, patient film; drenched in atmosphere and happy to be subtle where less confident pictures would blow up a building or disappear in a hail of gunfire. This is a thriller in the old fashioned sense of the word, where the thrills are generally understated, intelligently navigated with words rather than bullets.

Those familiar with the book will have an easier time of it from the start, but this is not intended as a criticism of the film. Things begin in ostensibly slow fashion, but the film is covertly establishing details and supporting characters as much as it is atmosphere. In general, it rewards those willing to pay attention, particularly in what is a

densely packed first act.

As things settle down we are introduced to protagonist George Smiley (Gary Oldman), who remains mute in the opening scenes, coldly taking in his surroundings. He is a semi-retired British spy brought back into the fold by Control (John Hurt), who believes that a Russian double agent is operating out of the Circus, a building from which top secret espionage activity is carried out. As time goes by, we realise that the possibility of there being a spy is far from paranoid guesswork; this isn't the first time the warning bells have been sounded.

Smiley is called upon to delve into the workings of the Circus' old guard – a generation of high-ranking spooks with whom he has worked for decades. Oldman plays Smiley in the spirit of the film; calm and collected, but nervy. We see him often from behind, the subtle twinges in his neck giving away an underlying sense of insecurity. That sensibility is echoed in Alfredson's direction, which at times restricts our view by peering through murky windows or railings.

The Circus' top brass are a collection of agents, all of whom show vulnerability in differing, very nuanced ways. They make for a convincing group of ageing spies and we sense that a great deal of unseen past exists between them. This believability is generated thanks to a raft of pitch-perfect performances from an overwhelmingly good cast. Toby Jones, Colin Firth, Tom Hardy, Mark Strong, Benedict Cumberbatch, Ciarán Hinds; it's an honours list of British actors

currently on top form, and the casting more than pays off. That's without mentioning smaller supporting roles from the likes of Kathy Burke and Stephen Graham too.

Technically the film is excellent. Alfredson's direction is unhurried, moody and subtle, and that is backed up by Alberto Iglesias' gently brooding score. The framing and attention to detail lend the film a similar preciseness to *Let the Right One In*, and the editing handles the film's twisting, layered narrative well. You'll be unsure at times, but that is part of the film's mysterious intention, not a failing of the script or structure.

There are minor frustrations. The film's exquisitely constructed atmosphere rarely summons up the level of threat or tension that it feels like it could have done, while the denouement left me a little cold. Eventual revelations are subtle and well devised – in keeping with the film's style – but that approach means the film lacks a cathartic final bow, or an emotional punch. This also means that the motivations of the antagonist are not given quite enough time or weight.

But these are minor quibbles against what is a very well made thriller. Its film noir sensibilities work very well, and Alfredson helms his expansive cast with great adeptness. Many thought the 1979 BBC production of the novel precluded the need for a feature film, but Le Carré himself has commended the efforts of all involved in this adaptation, and he was very right to do so. **MR**

★★★★★





# DRIVE

**DIRECTED BY** NICOLAS WINDING REFN **STARRING** RYAN GOSLING, CAREY MULLIGAN, BRYAN CRANSTON, ALBERT BROOKS, CHRISTINA HENDRICKS & RON PERLMAN

**RELEASED** OUT NOW

Gathering buzz (and awards) at film festivals across the world, *Drive* is one of director Nicolas Winding Refn first pictures to hit release under some serious weight of expectation, and delightfully, it hits every mark.

Getting by on mediocre money as a stuntman by day, Ryan Gosling plays a talented driver who moonlights as a getaway wheelman by night, but when he helps a neighbour's husband (Isaac) out on a job, the heist goes wrong and a contract is put out on his head as he seemingly can't give back the bag of cash that he's left with.

Kicking off with a wonderful soundtrack that instantly gets you

in the right mood, *Drive's* narrative struggles for pace at times and feels somewhat uneven in terms of plot development, but it's so utterly stylish you can easily look beyond its intermittent misgivings.

Though the first car chase lacks momentum and raw energy, after that they're much better and feel a lot like a video game, it's the characters, however, that really set the film apart.

After bumping into his neighbour at a local store before saying a proper hello in the elevator in their block, a love story is ignited between the driver and Irene, her played wonderfully by the charming Carey Mulligan. She's perfect as the film's damsel, and the chemistry between the two characters is fantastic. Feeling naturally awkward in early conversation, their relationship instantly sucks you in before her husband returns from prison and the driver feels compelled to help out, if only for her. If you needed further proof Ryan Gosling is set for the A-List too, this is certainly it.

Elsewhere Ron Perlman is devilish and intriguing alongside Albert Brooks as the film's enemies, but across the board everyone is great, all the smaller roles are wonderfully acted with Bryan Cranston also deserving special credit.

After signing Ryan Gosling on for the lead role, in a near unheard of move, producer Marc E. Platt, offered the talented actor free choice for who he'd like to helm the picture, and dictating Refn was a fine choice.

Directing the film in a neo-noir, arthouse style, *Drive's* aesthetic is utterly appealing, an intoxicating mix of colour tone, wide-angle shots and naturalistic ideals. The film treats the audience with intelligence; it doesn't lay everything out and instead leaves you to do a little legwork too.

*Drive* is the sort of film that will make you want to delve into Refn's back catalogue, and it'll be the real making of him in Hollywood, though for now, just go see it, and look forward to the rest later. **SB**

★★★★★



# THE HELP

**DIRECTED BY** TATE TAYLOR **STARRING** EMMA STONE, VIOLA DAVIS, BRYCE DALLAS HOWARD, OCTAVIA SPENCER, JESSICA CHASTAIN, ANNA O'REILLY & ALLISON JANNEY

**RELEASED** OUT NOW (USA) OCTOBER 26 (UK)

*The Help* is an adaptation of Kathryn Stockett's popular 2009 novel about the treatment of black house maids in 1960s Mississippi by their white employers. This film reaches UK soil late, having already made waves (and a lot of money) in the US. It is good natured, well-acted and likable, in spite of its flaws.

The story begins where it spends most of its time: in Jackson, Mississippi, and a newly graduated Skeeter Phelan (Emma Stone) has just returned home. She returns to a deeply divided community, where white, social-climbing housewives lord it over their hardworking African-American housemaids. Their racism is so ingrained that they scarcely seem able to distinguish between right and wrong, apparently believing that their treatment of the maids differs morally in some way to that of the violence carried out by white-hooded off-screen gangs. They are the "real racists" says one white character, missing the crashing irony of her own statement.

Skeeter returns with the intention of becoming a journalist, and winds up landing a small-time job at a local paper writing a tiny column about housekeeping. That topic leads her to ask for tips from one of her friends' maids, Aibileen (Viola Davis). Skeeter's family and friends don't so much object to her spending time with 'the help' but are rather shocked that

she should want to, which is perhaps indicative of a deeper malady. Her aspiration to publish a book for an editor in New York – who tells her she needs a unique angle – turns her discussions with Aibileen (and others) into an exposé of the treatment of black maids. These discussions must be kept secret because the maids, though they are treated very poorly, cannot afford to lose their jobs.

Perhaps Skeeter's time away from the society in which she grew up has changed her; perhaps she is simply better-natured than her peers, but she possesses none of their inbuilt hostility. This may in part stem from the relationship she had with her own African-American maid when she was growing up, a woman whom she genuinely loved, and who loved her in return. That woman is now missing, adding another layer to her personal desire to write the book, and indeed a further chapter to the book itself.

Stone's likable performance is offset against a clutch of preening, vacuous socialites headed up by Hilly Holbrook (Bryce Dallas Howard) who, amongst other things, is attempting to get a bill passed into law specifying that black maids must use separate bathrooms to those of their employers. Hilly is the primary antagonist of the piece and in some ways a heavy-handed pantomime villain, but effectively nonetheless. Her nonchalant slurs are shocking in their own right; we're not talking *American History X* here, but even within the film's fairly cuddly walls (it remains reasonably chirpy throughout) it takes her ignorance seriously. In this case, the character is rather unsubtly allowed to hang herself with her own rope, but it works with the film's tone. She's a villain to be booed from the stalls, with almost

no depth behind such a facade.

The maids are represented most prominently through the performances of Davis and Octavia Spencer, who plays good-natured (but strong-willed) Minny Jackson. A subplot sees Minny going to work for Jessica Chastain's "white trash" housewife Celia Foote, who needs her maid to do the cooking and cleaning so her husband doesn't think she's useless. These scenes summon up a few smiles, and Chastain's strong performance (both comic and melancholy) makes Celia an unlikely hero to cheer for. Davis and Spencer are excellent, papering over the film's cracks and more saccharine beats with restrained dignity (in Davis' case) and good comic timing (Spencer). Emma Stone leads the film with confidence, proving that she has a dramatic string to her bow. A number of performances in recent years – *Zombieland*, *Easy A*, and again here – have marked her out as a likable screen presence.

*The Help* is ultimately a slice of well-meaning, well-acted entertainment that will charm you long before it's over. At times its moralising can be a little too black and white, and there are sentimental intervals which might put some people off. Indeed, the overall tone might alienate some people, because this is a generally family-friendly affair which isn't interested in getting its hands too dirty. There are a couple of comic beats – including one running joke about a pie which feels not only out of place, but also unduly crucial to the story's outcome – which miss the mark here and there, but not by enough to derail the film. By the time things are cosily wrapped up, you've spent two hours in endearing company and will likely have been sufficiently charmed. **MR**

★★★★★





# DOLPHIN TALE

**DIRECTED BY** CHARLES MARTIN SMITH **STARRING** HARRY CONNICK JR., ASHLEY JUDD, NATHAN GAMBLE, KRIS KRISTOFFERSON, COZI ZUEHLSORFF & MORGAN FREEMAN

**RELEASED** OUT NOW (USA) OCTOBER 14 (UK)

When his cousin (Stowell) flies out for service, Sawyer Nelson (Gamble) feels lost. Struggling to find focus during the summer holidays, despite enforced classes at school, it's not until a chance encounter cycling in one day, that he at last finds something he can be passionate about. Caught in a crab trap and washed ashore off Florida's Indian River, Sawyer helps cut an injured dolphin free, before vets from the local

marine centre take it in for care. Christened Winter, Sawyer starts visiting the injured dolphin, quickly developing a special bond with the animal, though when its damaged tailfin has to be removed, she needs Sawyer's help now more than ever.

After his cousin returns home from service through injury, Sawyer is introduced to prosthetics expert Dr. McCarthy (Freeman), and alongside a big fundraising event, creating a new fin to attach to Winter's tail proves to be her only hope of survival.

Though *Dolphin Tale* is certainly much more targeting at kids, it might surprise a few adults too, as despite the hugely predictable plot arcs, it's easy to be sucked in. Based on a true story, it's no surprise the characters are grounded and believable, and on

top, especially from the two young leads Nathan Gamble and Cozi Zuehlsdorff, there's a good ensemble performance from the cast as a whole.

As the inventive doctor too, Morgan Freeman puts in an entertaining shift, funnily quite similar to his portrayal of tech. genius Lucius Fox in the *Batman* series.

*Dolphin Tale* is an endearing story of family, friendship and fighting for what you believe in. As the characters creep up on you, holding a surprising emotional weight by the time the credits roll in, the film gets away without feeling overly clichéd, even though it's such an obvious story of fighting against adversity. It's not a classic, but it's a well-meaning and entertaining film for all the family. **SB**

★★★★★





# SLEEPING BEAUTY

**DIRECTED BY** JULIA LEIGH **STARRING** EMILY BROWNING, RACHAEL BLAKE, EWEN LESLIE, PETER CARROLL, CHRIS HAYWOOD, EDEN FALK, MIRRAH FOULKES & JAMES FRASER

**RELEASED** OCTOBER 14 (UK) TBC (USA)

Considering the lead character is near naked for almost half the film, it's remarkable just how unprovocative Julia Leigh's debut *Sleeping Beauty* feels.

The story of a young university student, Lucy (Browning), who after applying for an elite silver service position, is dragged deeper and deeper into her boss' (Blake) mysterious high-end services. Starting out as a lingerie-clad waitress, when Lucy needs to meet the payments of a new flat, she takes on more and more work and moves into a new role, offering customers the

chance of a few hours alone with a real life sleeping beauty.

There's no surprise writer/director Julia Leigh's wonderful script made the 2008 *Black List*, basing what is more than enough of a plot around an original and exciting concept with great potential to explore and create, but Leigh seems to have switched off when she got her hands on the camera.

While production values are of a high standard and the acting throughout fairly superb, *Sleeping Beauty* is nowhere near as edgy or risqué as it could, and really should, have been. Though you'll struggle to find a film hit cinemas all year with more outright nudity, nothing on show is provocative or even particularly sexy. Largely girls walking around in open-front lingerie, a deathly tone kills the mood as at times the film becomes nothing more than a long line of exposed flesh.

The direction fails to emote any

of the ideas or concepts in the script. There's no tone, no sense of escalation, no real style; it feels strangely bland, and the colour palette is vastly unexplored, giving off a restrictively cold aesthetic. *Sleeping Beauty* feels forceful, not inquisitive, and devoid of real imagination and creativity in its translation to the silver screen.

Emily Browning's performance is wonderfully captivating but her job never really feels like it descends into the implied levels of chaos, while the talking points and closing 'sleeping beauty' idea are never really developed.

Penning the film as well as directing, there's no doubt Julia Leigh has great potential, but she needs to refine her craft behind the camera to bring out the great ideas in her scripts. *Sleeping Beauty* lacks style and charisma, and for that she should take note from Richard Ayoade's *Submarine*. **SB**

★★★★★





# EVERYTHING MUST GO

**DIRECTED BY** DAN RUSH **STARRING** WILL FERRELL, CHRISTOPHER JORDAN WALLACE, REBECCA HALL, MICHAEL PEÑA, ROSALIE MICHAELS, STEPHEN ROOT & LAURA DERN

**RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) OCTOBER 14 (UK)**

Will Ferrell makes a rare foray into serious material in *Everything Must Go*, and once again proves himself as that rare thing: a primarily comedic actor at home with playing it straight. Like *Stranger Than Fiction*, another drama with an overly neat conceit, *Everything Must Go* is let down by creaky plot devices and ultimately easy resolutions. But Dan Rush's debut feature is also a testament to Ferrell's ability to be convincingly human on-screen, even when his film's gentle trajectory fails to stretch him too much.

Based on a Raymond Carver short story, *Everything Must Go* sees Nick (Ferrell) arrive at work to be fired for an apparent sexual misdemeanour brought on by his drinking problem. Returning home to find that his wife has locked him out of the house, and with all of his belongings packed up outside, he resolves to live among his possessions, pretending to hold the yard sale that, in one of the film's many convenient plot points, legally allows him to live on his front lawn.

What follows is mostly predictable, with Nick striking up unlikely friendships with a local boy (Christopher Jordan Wallace) and a sympathetic neighbour (Rebecca Hall) who together help him face his demons. The central conceit of Nick having to sell off his possessions in order to be rebuild his life, whilst contrived, isn't without its charm, and Ferrell's easy humanity is aided by sympathetic turns by the likes of Jordan Wallace and especially Hall, who plays a woman with problems that mirror Nick's own with her usual steely vulnerability.

For all the charm of its central idea, though, *Everything Must Go's* conceits are ultimately a little too neat. Plot points such as the AA sponsor whose job as a cop helps Nick stay out of trouble, and old flame Laura Dern waiting for him once he deals with his problems, leave the film lacking the messiness of the life that it is earnestly trying to portray. Rush, meanwhile, elects for easy resolutions at every turn, wrapping up *Everything Must Go's* various plot strands to leave his characters facing happy futures.

More damningly, Nick's misdemeanours are alluded to without the despair and misery that surely accompany a life of alcoholism, and redemption seems to come a little too easily in the end. While Ferrell, Hall and Jordan Wallace nobly breathe life into characters that are little more than plot devices, they cannot stop the impact from being feather-light. For a film that preaches giving it all away, *Everything Must Go* could have done with being a little more bold. **AS**

★★★★★



## HORRIBLE BOSSES

Funny, if obvious, comedy about three friends so frustrated with their jobs they craft plan to knock off each other's bosses. Needless to say, it's doesn't go according to plan. The three leads prove very entertaining.

Film ★★★★★

Extras ★★★★★



## CAMP HELL

Jesse Eisenberg pops up (for a couple of minutes) as evil spreads amongst a religious camp intended to spread love, faith and goodwill. Lacklustre and sold on a false promise of starring the guy from *The Social Network*.

Film ★★★★★

Extras ★★★★★

## LAST NIGHT

Stuttery romantic drama starring Sam Worthington, Keira Knightley and Eva Mendes; a couple spent the night apart and each find themselves posed with the temptation of love and lust outside their relationship.

Film ★★★★★

Extras ★★★★★



## THE ADVENTURES OF TINTIN

Every episode of the wonderful animated series based on Hergé's classic children's books. One of the best shows ever made, *Tintin* really is a must-watch, and now in HD.

Show ★★★★★

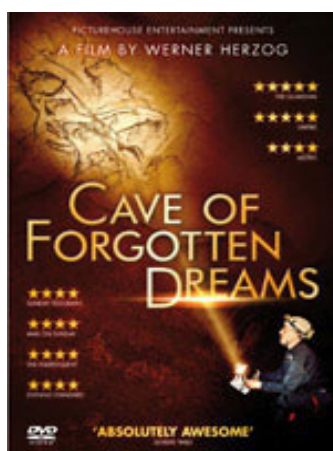
Extras ★★★★★

## CAVE OF THE FORGOTTEN DREAMS

Werner Herzog explores the Chauvet Cave, home to the earliest known cave paintings, spliced alongside various scientist and historian interviews for good measure.

Show ★★★★★

Extras ★★★★★



## GREEN LANTERN

You'll struggle to find any a more forgettable or flyby experience in film all year, and yet there are moments of fun and a thrill and laugh or two along the way. There will apparently be a sequel though, so hopefully that'll be better.

Film ★★★★★

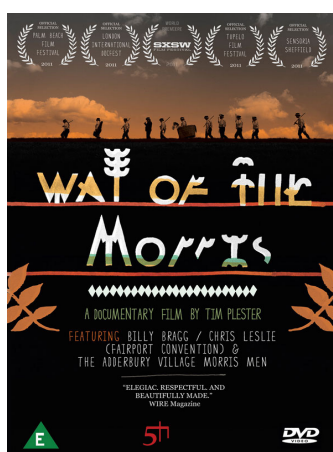
Extras ★★★★★

## WAY OF THE MORRIS

Documentary by Tim Plester and Rob Curry exploring the origins and stories at the heart of great English tradition, Morris dancing. An honest and heartfelt exploration, the film delves too into Plester's involvement.

Film ★★★★★

Extras ★★★★★




## THE WARD

Though his reputation might be waning of late, John Carpenter (*Halloween* et al) returns behind the camera as the institutionalised Kristen is terrorised by a ghost, despite great promise, *The Ward*, however, proves very tame.

Film ★★★★★

Extras ★★★★★





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WAY OUT WEST  
BY AMBER CHAVEZ



FACE 2 FACE BY AXEL  
BRECHENSBAUER



SAME TIME EVERY DAY  
BY KRAMER O'NEILL



USUAL SUSPECTS  
BY MIKKEL SOMMER



ART

# WAY OUT WEST

PHOTOGRAPHY AMBER CHAVEZ (AMBERCHAVEZ.COM)













































































# FACE 2 DATA

SCULPTURES AXEL BRECHENSBAUER (MYNAMEISAXEL.COM)



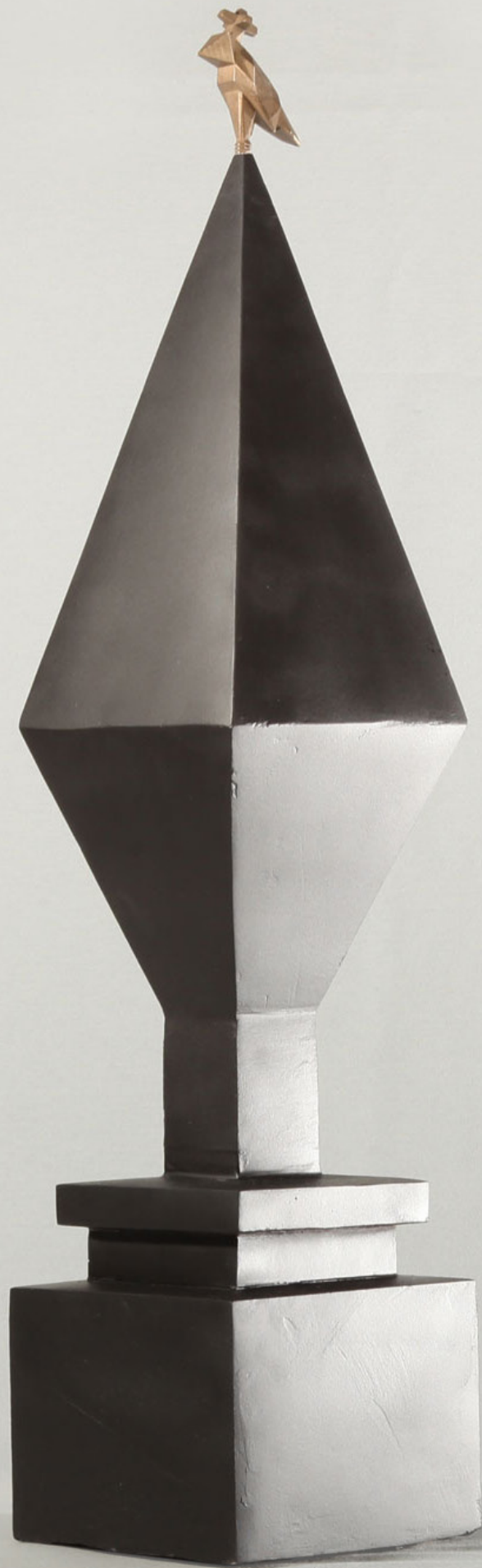
























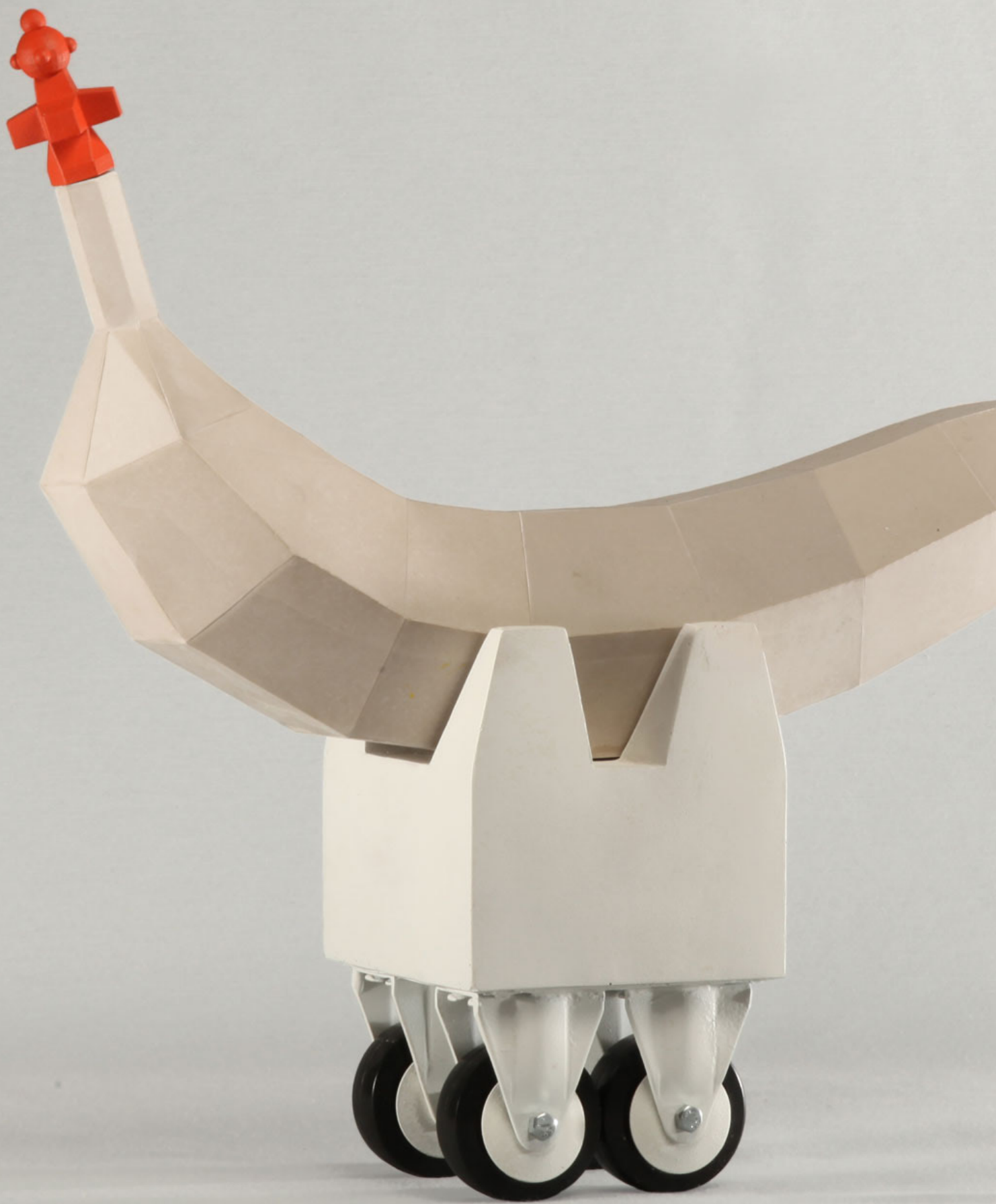




















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# SAMETIMEEVERYDAY

PHOTOGRAPHY KRAMER O'NEILL (KRAMERONEILL.COM)

CREATED IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE DESIGN TRUST FOR PUBLIC SPACE PHOTO URBANISM FELLOWSHIP







St

EERINGS

















































A black and white photograph of a train car. The top of the car is visible, with the words "Clean Air" printed on it. The interior of the car is dark, and several people are silhouetted against the windows. The people are standing and looking out the windows. The windows show a bright, possibly outdoor scene. The overall mood is contemplative and quiet.

Clean Air

**years and still strong.**











# Usual suspects

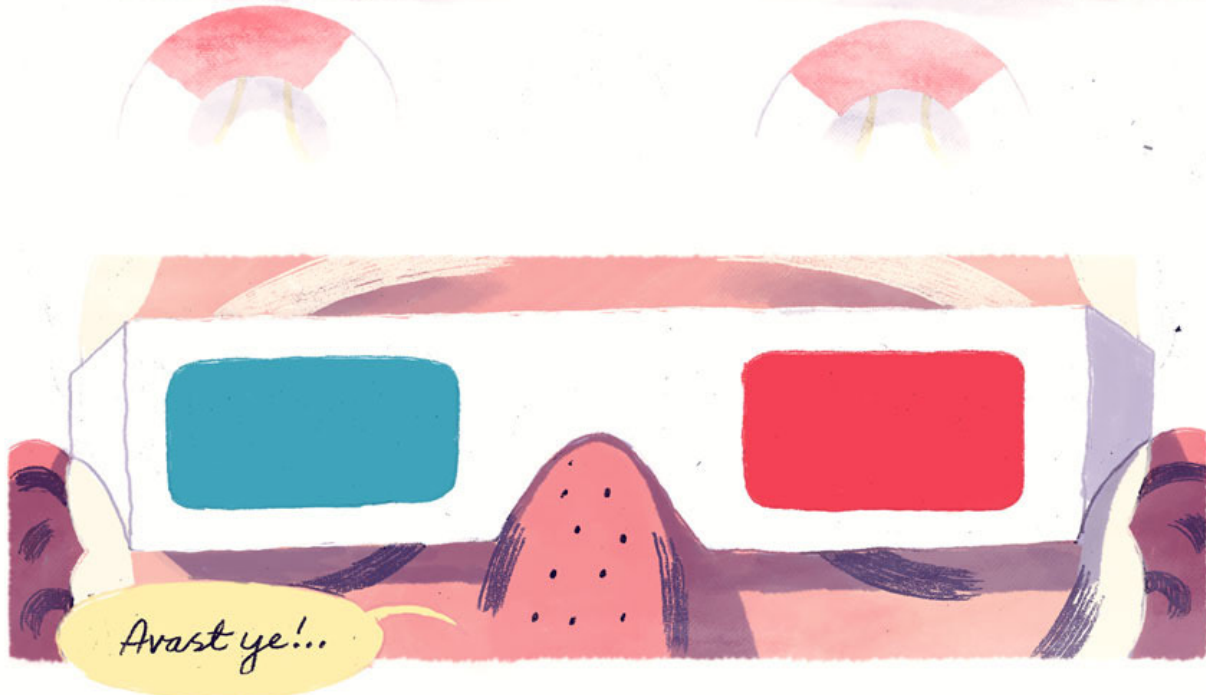
ILLUSTRATIONS MIKKEL SOMMER (MIKKELSOMMER.COM)







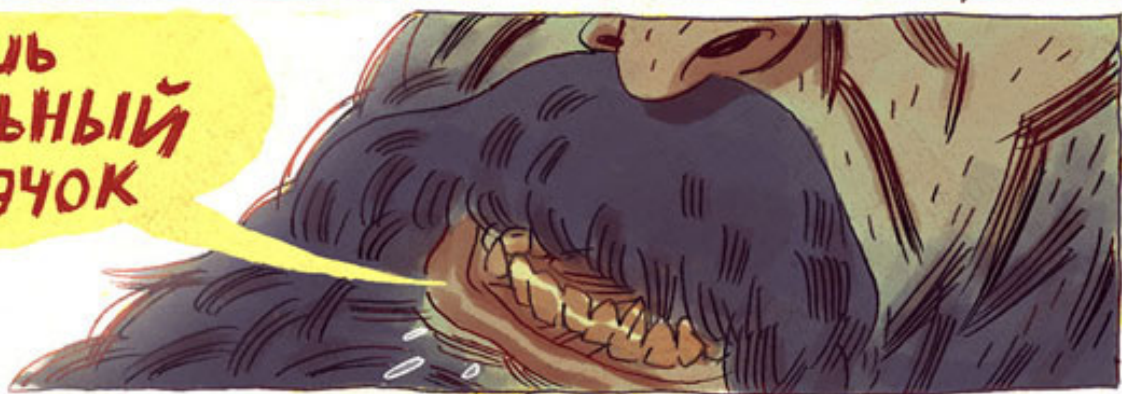








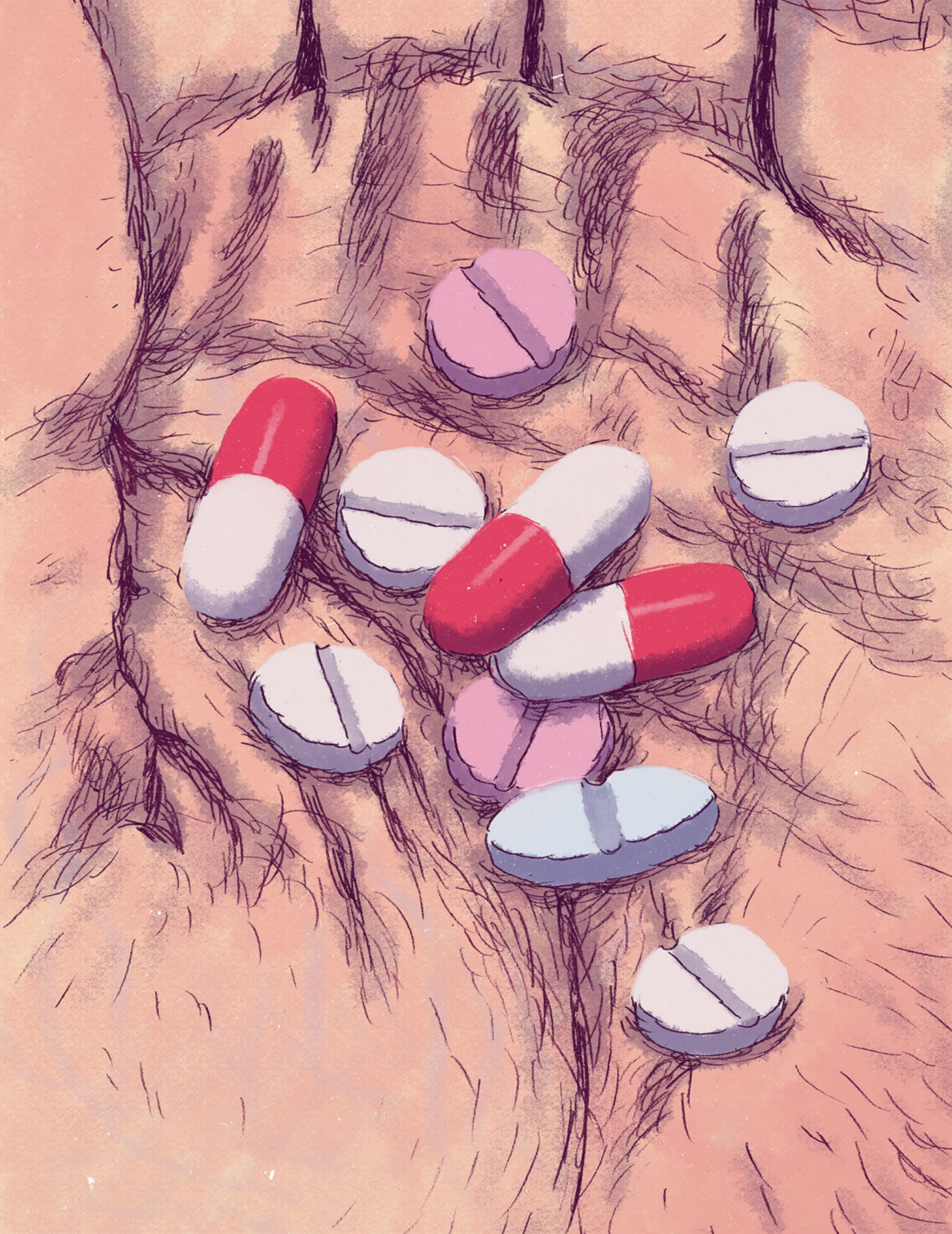
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НЕПРАВИЛЬНЫЙ  
ПУТЬ ДУРАЧОК

























10/11/10



























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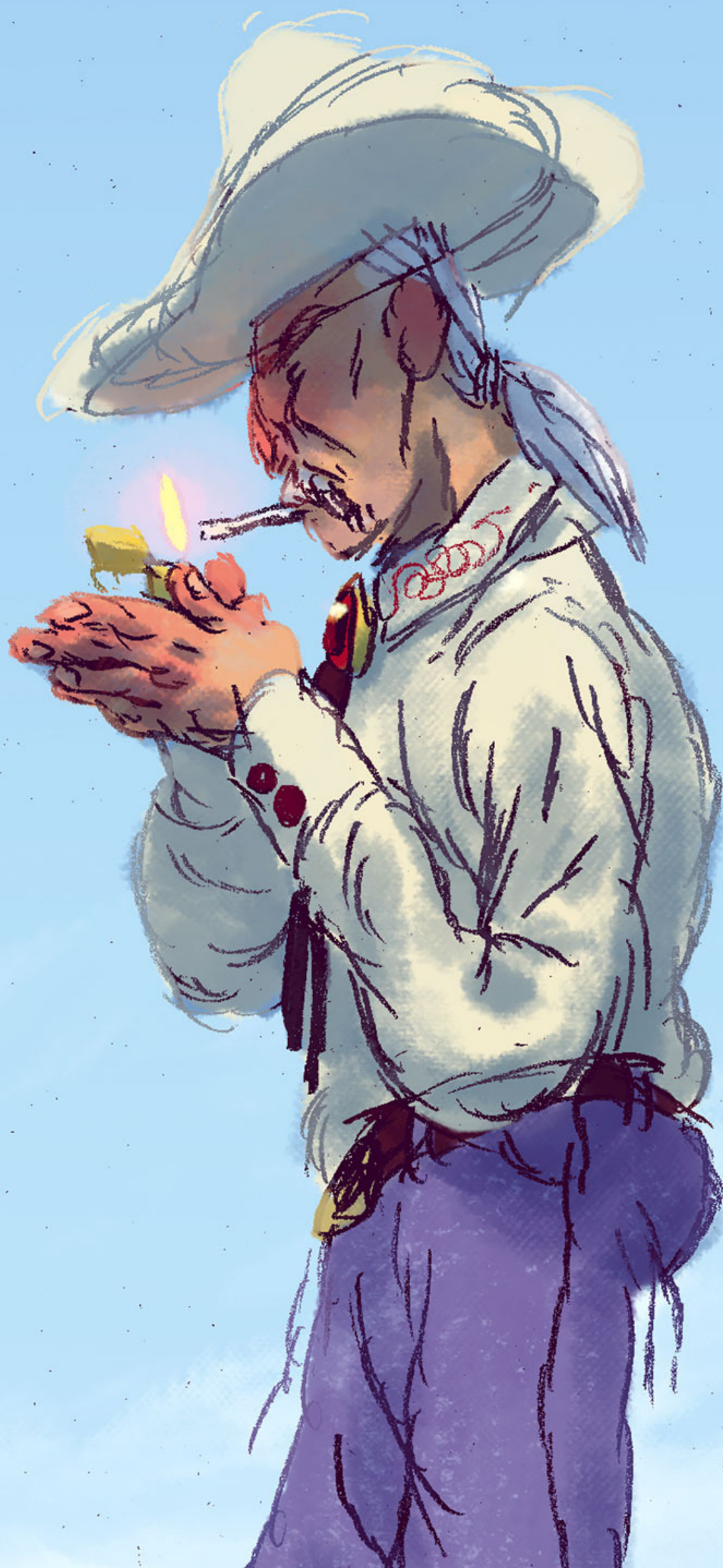


















**STYLE**





CROSS BY  
DILIA OVIEDO



TAKE THE F TRAIN  
BY MATINIQUE



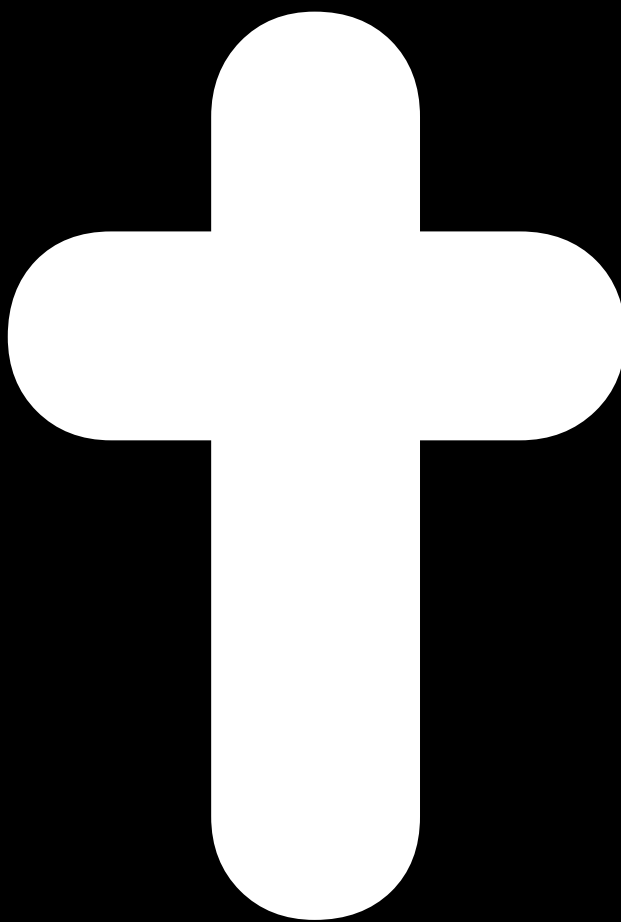
ESCAPE ESCAPE BY  
MARKUS ZIEGLER



HARD TO LOVE BY  
DANIEL LUXFORD







PHOTOGRAPHY DILIA OVIEDO ([FACEBOOK.COM/DIOVPHTOGRAPHY](https://www.facebook.com/diovphtography))  
MODELS LAUREN AUERBACH (UNO BARCELONA) & ANN MÜÜRSEPP (MIAH MANAGEMENT)  
STYLING ANA STING  
HAIR & MAKEUP LARA TASCON & LUCIE GARDINER-WORSHIP  
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Dress **Forever 21**  
Boots **Twin Set**







Veil **Stylist's own**  
Dress **Tara Jarmon**





Veil Stylist's own Belt Stylist's  
own Dress Tara Jarmon



















Jersey **Tara Jarmon** Skirt  
**Tara Jarmon** Boots Twin Set





STYLE



Crown **Ana Sting**  
Dress **Tara Jarmon**



Jersey **Tara Jarmon**  
Pants **Twin Set**





Veil **Stylist's own**





STYLE

# ***TAKE THE F TRAIN***

CLOTHES MATINIQUE FALL 2011 ([MATINIQUE.COM](http://MATINIQUE.COM))  
MODEL SAM WEBB









































LISTENING WITH  
HIGH TRADE SHOPS





























STYLE

# ESCAPE ESCAPE

PHOTOGRAPHY MARKUS ZIEGLER (MARKUSZIEGLER.COM)

STYLISTS SHANNA NICOLE & ELISSA AIMEE

HAIR & MAKE-UP STEVEN HOEPPNER

MODEL SARA VON SCHRENK (ELITE MIAMI)

Hat **Missoni** Top **Missoni** Purse **Gucci** Bikini bottom **Eres** Earrings **Jewels by Tricia**









Dress **Luis Vuitton** Bikini top  
Eres Necklace **Reem Acra**







STYLE



Bikini top **Free People** Necklace  
**Missoni** Bracelet **Missoni**









Hat **Missoni** Top **Missoni** Earrings **Jewels by Tricia**





Bikini **Eres** Trousers **Just Cavalli** Bracelets  
Jewels by **Tricia** Earrings **Jewels by Tricia**





Bikini top **Eres** Necklace **Dior**



Headband **Missoni** Swimsuit **Eres** Trousers **Just Cavalli** Earrings **Dior** Necklace **Dior**







Bikini top **Free People** Skirt **Missoni** Necklace **Missoni** Bracelet **Missoni**





Blouse **Peter Som** Swimsuit  
**Missoni** Necklace **Reem Acra**



STYLE

# HARD

# T

# LOVE

PHOTOGRAPHY DANIEL LUXFORD  
([DANIELLUXFORD.COM](http://DANIELLUXFORD.COM))

HAIR & MAKE-UP KATE FLETCHER  
MODEL KARINA (GIANT MODELS)













































An aerial, high-angle view of a dense urban landscape. The buildings are tightly packed, with a variety of architectural styles. A prominent feature is a tall, modern skyscraper with a bright red facade, which stands out against the more traditional, lower-rise buildings. The colors of the buildings range from dark greys and blacks to warm oranges, yellows, and reds. The perspective is looking down from a high vantage point, creating a sense of depth and scale.

**NEXT ISSUE**  
NOVEMBER 25







