



CLOSE UP

AUCKLAND FILM SOCIETY Vol 81 March – November 2026

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Ω Open to the public, all tickets \$15, AFS members free
* Open to the public, courtesy of the Goethe-Institut. Admission by donation (notes only, please)



Monday 09 March at 6:15 pm

Run Lola Run Lola rennt
Germany 1998

Director/Screenplay: Tom Tykwer
Producer: Stefan Arndt
Production Co: X-Filme Creative Pool
Photography: Frank Griebe
Editor: Mathilde Bonnefoy
Music: Tom Tykwer, Johnny Klimek, Reinhold Heil

With: Franka Potente (Lola), Moritz Bleibtreu (Manni), Herbert Knaup (Lola's father), Nina Petri (Frau Hansen), Armin Rohde (Herr Schuster), Hans Paetsch (Narrator)

80 mins, DCP. M violence & offensive language. In German with English subtitles

It's a furiously kinetic display of pyrotechnics from the director Tom Tykwer, who fuses lightning-fast visual tricks, tirelessly shifting styles and the arbitrary possibilities of interactive storytelling into the best-case scenario for a cinematic video game... For its sheer cleverness and gamesmanship, its altered sense of emotion and meaning in the face of breathless forward momentum, his film makes a startling harbinger of things to come. Tykwer deliberately blows away all traces of the mundane and the familiar, so that not even the closing credit crawl moves in the expected way.

Run Lola Run opens with typical smashing bravado, as a few vague voice-over speculations about the nature of mankind give way to a strikingly bold image. A crowd milling around suddenly forms the word *Lola* as the camera shifts from ground level to aerial view, and with that we're off and running. Or Lola (Franka Potente) is, anyhow, in a film that keeps her hurtling forward almost all the time. The setup sounds like something out of a game's rule book: Lola's boyfriend, Manni (Moritz Bleibtreu), will be killed if she can't come up with a large sum of money and meet him across town in 20 minutes' time.

As Lola takes off... the fun is in the details. There are marking points along her route that will be important later. A visit to her father's office, an encounter between an ambulance and a sheet of plate glass, assorted encounters of the street: all of these will be refracted later in various ways. Meanwhile everything looks as dazzling as possible, like the way the camera watches Lola run past her idle mother, spins around the mother and then zooms in on a television screen where Lola is now running as a cartoon version of herself.

The trip to Manni ends... but that hardly carries any weight here. Soon everything is erased and we are back with the flying red telephone receiver that sparked Lola's journey.

This time each encounter is somehow different, just different enough to alter the course of fate in playfully profound ways. Tykwer's visual virtuosity revels in the possibilities here, as when he splits the screen between Lola and Manni, then lets a ticking clock approaching zero hour (noon) slide up from the bottom of the image.

"What a difference a day makes," the soundtrack croons mischievously, while the destiny of each minor character (shown in rapid-fire flash cuts, a whole lifetime in a matter of seconds) is made utterly different each time. The story eventually replays yet another time, and it takes on new sardonic twists with each new permutation, in a show of creative fireworks that is almost the most remarkable aspect of the film. The real miracle, though, is that Lola (like the filmmaker) seems to run through it all without losing her verve or breaking a sweat. – Janet Maslin, *New York Times*



Monday 16 March at 6:15 pm

The Quiet Earth
New Zealand 1985

Director: Geoff Murphy
Producers: Sam Pillsbury, Don Reynolds
Production Co: Cinepro, Pillsbury Productions, Mr Yellowbeard Productions
Screenplay: Bill Baer, Bruno Lawrence, Sam Pillsbury, based on the novel by Craig Harrison
Photography: James Bartle
Editor: Michael J Horton
Music: John Charles

With: Bruno Lawrence (Zac Hobson), Alison Routledge (Joanne), Pete Smith (Api)

91 mins, Blu-ray. M adult themes

"Quite simply the best science-fiction film of the 80s" – *Los Angeles Daily News*

The Quiet Earth is not your utopian, sterile, futuristic sci-fi, it's not your used-future, action and adventure space opera, it's not your interstellar military space exploration show, nor is it even your dusty, sandy, post-apocalyptic renegade adventure. But for those of you who can handle the cerebral drama that marks some of the best sci-fi, *The Quiet Earth* is for you. There are very few films like it. JC Macek, *PopMatters*

The Quiet Earth is a haunting, lyrical look at what it might be like to be alone on a planet that can get along just fine without us. Bruno Lawrence is Zac, an ordinary middle-aged New Zealander who wakes up one day and happily spends time by himself before beginning to find it odd that there's no-one else around. No-one at all. Disbelief persists for some time; then there's panic; and gradually, resignation. Within this, the breakdown of social behaviours. Having none of the purposefulness of Will Smith's lone survivor in *I Am Legend*, he plunges into hedonism, moving into a mansion, dressing in silk negligees. By the time he eventually meets another human being – Alison Routledge's differently troubled Joanne – he's almost forgotten how to communicate. It's only the need to justify himself to someone else that propels him back into action and gives him the courage to ask the obvious questions. This is critical because, whilst she has no idea what has happened, it's possible he does.

A powerful study of loneliness, the film hinges on Lawrence's understated but profoundly sympathetic performance. Zac is just complex and unreasonable enough to remain interesting when doing nothing whilst remaining someone most people in the audience will be able to identify with. At the time of release, when most films in the genre featured assertive, traditionally masculine men, his ordinariness had a profound appeal, and Lawrence always makes him feel real. Believing in his loneliness, it's easy to understand the need that he and Joanne feel for one another, and the mix of relief and terror that ensues from this when they meet somebody else.

Much of the best science fiction functions as metaphor, enabling writers to explore themes that it would be impractical to take on in more conventional settings. The great strength of this film is not in anything technical or visually spectacular (both these elements are used sparingly) but in its human focus. The simplicity of its structure and core idea mean that it has aged much better than most of its peers, and unlike most similarly high concept films, it doesn't fall apart at the end but successfully ups the ante. Most of the cinematography is low key, so that when it wants to dazzle it can easily do so, and Geoff Murphy is a director who understands that less is often more. The quietness with the film lets it build up tension stealthily, putting Murphy in complete control, until the clamour of what is unspoken builds to a crescendo. Jennie Kermodé, *Eye for Film*



Monday 23 March at 6:00 pm

Early start – long run time

La Chimera
Italy/France/Switzerland/Germany 2023

AFS thanks Metropolitan Rentals Ltd

Director/Screenplay: Alice Rohrwacher
Producer: Carlo Cresto Dina
Production Co: Tempesta, Rai Cinema, Ad Vitam Production, Amka Films Productions
Photography: Hélène Louvart
Editor: Nelly Quettier

With: Josh O'Connor (Arthur), Carol Duarte (Italia), Vincenzo Nemolato (Pirro), Alba Rohrwacher (Spartaco), Isabella Rossellini (Flora), Lou Roy-Lecollinet (Mélodie)

131 mins, Blu-ray. M offensive language. In Italian and English, with English subtitles

What a roll Josh O'Connor is on right now. Anyone who has failed to grasp his formidable range should treat themselves to a double bill of his current films: see him dangerously driven and fiercely charismatic in tennis shorts in *Challengers*, then follow it up with Alice Rohrwacher's glorious Italian-language film *La Chimera*, and a frayed, wounded O'Connor performance that ranks among his very finest to date. – Wendy Ide, *Observer*

A woman is missing. Arthur (Josh O'Connor) imagines her, he sees her in his dreams, but deep down he knows that Beniamina (Yile Vianello) is gone, even if he can't admit it to himself. Or to her mother, Flora (Isabella Rossellini), who he returns to after a short stint in prison. He can't quite adjust to the outside world, and not just because Italian isn't his first language and some locals giggle at this strange Englishman.

There is something destabilising, too, about Alice Rohrwacher's style, which she has expanded for *La Chimera*, her fourth feature, into something almost linear, with all sorts of visual ideas – from exaggerated blocking, to jump cuts, to sped-up footage – that are seldom used more than once. And only after eighties-sounding synths appear on the soundtrack, about an hour in, do you notice that the film's setting is ambiguous: it could be the modern day or a few decades earlier, or, in a deeper sense, it could be much, much older.

History is close to the surface in Central Italy, as it seems like everyone is living within the accumulated wreckage of thousands of years. But the temporal divide is made stark when Arthur, falling back in with his Felliniesque gang of grave robbers, digs into the ancient Etruscan tombs scattered everywhere. In the cold silence of this long dead world there is breathless tension, and it feels like they might never be able to return to their own world.

But Arthur has a stronger sense for this archaic world. He has an extrasensory ability to dowse for tombs, and whenever he stands atop one, the camera – at first slowly, then in sharp flashes – turns upside down, or maybe, for him, the right way up. He is like an Orpheus who can only look back, always too terrified to face the world in front of him and what has left it.

Though the camera often follows Arthur's perspective, it isn't neatly tied to it. Just as it doesn't make a precise distinction between images shot on 16mm, Super16 and 35mm; one isn't used only for dreams, even if it's most associated with them. Rohrwacher instead makes connections through something more primal than logic, a flow of images that feels surprising but always intuitive, in the way a dream does. This doesn't make *La Chimera* distant or elusive, quite the opposite. It invites us into its labyrinthine structure and form, it allows us space to explore. Rohrwacher implicitly makes the case against coherence: much of life exists beyond our understanding and so, to express it except through abstraction and suggestion, is to flatten and obscure the depths of beauty and truth in... a language only partially understood. – Esmé Holden, *Little White Lies*

WELCOME TO AUCKLAND FILM SOCIETY

Our 2026 season is a richly eclectic programme of special screenings, classic features, documentaries and contemporary cinema from around the world.

Auckland Film Society is a non-profit incorporated society and a registered charitable organisation. AFS is run by volunteers elected at our AGM (next AGM is 28 April 2026). Visit us at aucklandfilmsociety.org.nz

Contact Auckland Film Society
Mob 021 161 0069 (answerphone)
Email aucklandfilmsociety@gmail.com
Post PO Box 5618, Victoria St West, Auckland 1142
Socials Facebook & Instagram /akfilmsoc

AFS Committee members are Mark Andersen, Jerome Cargill, Simon Erceg, Joshua Eyre, Andrew Lockett, Jane McKenzie, Craig Ranapia, Carmel Riordan, Kristina Siverson and Dave Watson.

Programming by Michael McDonnell at nzfilmsociety.org.nz

This issue of *Close Up* was edited by Andrew Lockett and Jane McKenzie. Picture research by Jane McKenzie and Michael McDonnell, NZ Federation of Film Societies





Monday 30 March at 6:00 pm

Early start – long run time

Monster Kaibutsu Japan 2023

Director/Producer/Editor: Kore-eda Hirokazu
Screenplay: Sakamoto Yuji
Production Co: Gaga, Toho
Photography: Kondo Ryuto
Music: Sakamoto Ryūichi

With: Andō Sakura (Mugino Saori), Nagayama Eita (Hori Michitoshi), Kurokawa Sōya (Mugino Minato), Hiiiragi Hinata (Hoshikawa Yori), Takahata Mitsuki (Suzumura Hirona), Kakuta Akihiro (Shoda Humiaki)

127 mins, Blu-ray. M. In Japanese with English subtitles

Monster is another striking piece of work from a master, a movie that's so carefully calibrated that you get lost in these characters, forgetting they're performers and not people caught up in a genuinely traumatic chapter of life. Brian Tallerico, *RogerEbert.com*

An incident of classroom misconduct – and its ramifications, both domestic and institutional – plays out from three different vantage points in *Monster*. 'Perspectives' wouldn't quite be the right term: though each section of Kore-eda Hirokazu's elegantly folded new film leads with a different character, the action is never shown explicitly through anyone's eyes. Reverse angles and newly adjacent, contextualising scenes shift our conception of blame and victimhood in a story that narrows from one of a hostile community to intimate, ecstatic isolation...

It begins with a building ablaze on the squat skyline of a small, unspecified Japanese city; a freak rainstorm will bookend proceedings, the elements twice uncannily intervening in a story of human impulse and foible. On one floor of the burning block is a hostess bar supposedly frequented by mild-mannered primary school teacher Mr Hori (Nagayama Eita); some distance away, widowed single mother Saori (Andō Sakura, the marvellous star of Kore-eda's 2018 film *Shoplifters*) watches the inferno with morbid interest from her apartment balcony. Her pre-teen son Minato (Kurokawa Soya) is one of Hori's students; his mother's distaste for Hori's rumoured extracurricular activities will soon factor into a tense bust-up with the school staff.

The hitherto gentle Minato has become sullen and unreadable – cutting his own hair, going awol in a storm drain, jumping from his mother's moving car. When he comes home from school with a facial injury, saying Hori is responsible, Saori reads the teacher and oddly impassive headmistress Fushimi (Tanaka Yūko) the riot act. She gets repeated deferential apologies, but no explanation; the script is sharp on how a culture of courtesy can impede candour.

After 45 minutes, we rewind to the beginning, with Hori's knowledge of classroom dynamics recalibrating our perception of Minato's behaviour. But the teacher's outburst that Minato is a bully – and his smaller, feyer classmate Yori (Hiiiragi Hinata) his target – doesn't ring true either: the boys are friends, perhaps chastely more, with an understanding of each other that increasingly excludes their minders.

'Who is the monster?' is a recurring question in Kore-eda's film, vocalised by the boys in a taunting, sing-song chant, but essentially paraphrased by adult characters keen to divide the world into villains and victims... But the friction between adults' rule-determined antagonism and the unbound emotional and imaginative expression of childhood is essential to the film's payoff – ineffable tragedy rising into galloping, sunlit release. – Guy Lodge, *Sight and Sound*



Tuesday 07 April at 6:15 pm

True Stories USA 1986

Director: David Byrne
Producer: Gary Kurfurst
Production co: True Stories Venture
Screenplay: Stephen Tobolowsky, Beth Henley, David Byrne
Photography: Ed Lachman
Editor: Caroline Biggerstaff
Music: Talking Heads

With: David Byrne (Narrator), John Goodman (Louis Fyne), Spalding Gray (Earl Culver), Annie McEnroe (Kay Culver), Swoosie Kurtz (Miss Rollings, The Lazy Woman), Pops Staples (Mr Tucker)

89 mins, Blu-ray. PG

Virgil, Texas, flat, cement-hard, shimmeringly uglybeautiful, holds the same fascination for David Byrne, who made it up, as Nashville did for Robert Altman or Grover's Corners for Thornton Wilder or the Emerald City of Oz for L Frank Baum. Or Hollywood for Nathanael West.

Joyous, daft and hauntingly original, *True Stories* is Byrne's magical mystery tour of Texas: an introduction to the imaginary town of Virgil and its faintly surreal folks. It should be no surprise that Byrne, that 'cultural jaywalker', has taken to yet another art form with complete ease... The result is a movie of effortless cool, the perfect entry for a late-'80s time capsule: affectionate but cautionary.

Byrne, mainspring of the Talking Heads and director, co-writer and Narrator here, shows us around the place, prowling Virgil's malls with a springy step, leaning confidentially out of his red Chrysler convertible to point with pride or amazement at Virgil's 'Celebration of Specialness', part of the Texas Sesquicentennial. Pin-neat and owlsh as ever, Byrne has adopted an enormous black Stetson for the occasion, his friendly way of fitting in – only to find that most of the people dress much as they do everywhere else.

Well, pretty much. There are the Urban Camouflage people at the mall's fashion show of specialness: whole families in suits of living grass or patterned brick. And there is a strangely '50s air to most of its women: to perfect wife and mother Kay Culver (Annie McEnroe), whose marriage is exemplary although she and her husband (Spalding Gray) have not spoken directly to each other in years. And both the Lying Woman (Jo Harvey Allen), who claims intimate knowledge of both Burt Reynolds and Mike Wallace, and Miss Rollings (Swoosie Kurtz), the Laziest Woman in the World, have a faint '50s displacement.

Virgil's men are expansive but lonely: bachelor Louis Fyne (John Goodman), the 'dancin' fool' shaped rather consistently like a panda bear, who has set up an electrified arrow reading *Wife Wanted*, pointing to his house. Ramon (Tito Larriva), who works with Louis at the Varicorp computer plant, can read his co-workers' 'tones' but has no lady of his own.

Louis and his search for love may be the centre of the movie, as much as it has one. He is a marvellous character, sweetly persistent in the face of romantic disaster, like his encounter with the Lying Woman and the Cute Woman (played with exactly the right tone of adorableness by Alix Elias). And Goodman has a grand, strong voice for the movie's stirring/unsettling final anthem ...

In its pleasant, frequently funny episodic vignettes-with-music, *True Stories* may seem disjointed, with only a wisp of an idea to batten upon, but Byrne's Polaroids of Virgil become an accumulative portrait that hints at unease in the heartland... In this flat, beautiful ribbon of a movie, Byrne has captured something else: a mix of the naive and the sophisticated that is fresh and startling. – Sheila Benson, *Los Angeles Times*



Monday 13 April at 6:15 pm

Humanist Vampire Seeking Consenting Suicidal Person Vampire humaniste cherche suicidaire consentant Canada 2023

Director: Ariane Louis-Seize
Producers: Jeanne-Marie Poulain, Line Sander Egede
Production co: Art et Essai
Screenplay: Ariane Louis-Seize, Christine Doyon
Photography: Shawn Pavlin
Editor: Stéphane Lafleur
Music: Pierre-Philippe Côté

With: Sara Montpetit (Sasha), Lilas-Rose Cantin (Sasha aged 6), Félix-Antoine Bénard (Paul), Steve Laplante (Aurélien), Sophie Cadieux (Georgette), Noémie O'Farrell (Denise), Valence Laroche (Denise aged 12)

90 mins, Blu-ray. M offensive language, horror & suicide references
In French and English, with English subtitles

Into the vibrant tapestry of coming-of-age cinema, *Humanist Vampire Seeking Consenting Suicidal Person* is sewn as a compelling entry that deftly intertwines comedy both sweet and black.

The debut feature of French director Ariane Louis-Seize revolves around Sasha (Sara Montpetit), a vampire in eternal teenage form, grappling with an existential crisis – she's too sensitive to kill. This dilemma is hardly new (touched on in *Interview with the Vampire* and *Twilight*, for starters), but it sets the stage for a poignant and original exploration of isolation, empathy, and the quest for connection in a flawed world.

Years after a hilariously dark encounter that sets Sasha on her pacifistic path, her parents have come to the end of their patience and cut off her blood supply. Sent to live with her enthusiastically carnivorous cousin Denise in a fruitless attempt to kickstart her vampirism, Sasha's survival now hinges on an unlikely alliance with Paul (Félix-Antoine Bénard), a lonely teenager contemplating his own mortality. After a chance encounter during an interrupted suicide attempt on the roof of a bowling alley, they embark on a nocturnal road trip to give Paul satisfying closure before he offers up his neck in sacrifice – a way for Sasha to feed without breaking her no-kill rule.

From the outset, it's clear that Louis-Seize is not merely telling another vampire story. With a premise as provocative as its title, *Humanist Vampire* speaks to what it means to be human and to be alone, navigating the complexities of mental health, touching on themes of consent and desire, and nailing the often-misrepresented struggles of youth...

Visually, *Humanist Vampire* complements its themes. Shot in perpetually low lighting and stark shadow, darkness is both refuge and a source of danger. The colours are muted, with pops of vibrancy occasionally breaking through, creating an ambience that effectively mirrors Sasha and Paul's fleeting moments of joy in their otherwise oppressive existence...

The smokescreen of a vampire movie lets [the film] navigate treacherous waters with levity, deftly touching on difficult topics. Its final message is beautifully optimistic – amidst our darkest moments, the bonds we create can offer solace and understanding. Even vampires are never truly alone. *Conor Bryce, Film Ireland*



Monday 20 April at 6:15 pm

City on Fire Lung foo fung wan Hong Kong 1987

Director: Ringo Lam
Producers: Karl Maka, Ringo Lam
Production co: Cinema City
Screenplay: Tommy Sham, from a story by Ringo Lam
Photography: Andrew Lau
Editor: Wong Ming-lam
Music: Teddy Robin Kwan

With: Chow Yun-fat (Ko Chow), Danny Lee (Fu), Sun Yueh (Inspector Lau/Uncle Kung), Carrie Ng (Hung), Roy Cheung (Inspector John Chan)

101 mins, Blu-ray. R18 violence. In Cantonese, Mandarin and English, with English subtitles

Tonally, Ringo Lam's *City on Fire* stands far apart from most of the Heroic Bloodshed films of its time. Compared to the punkish outrage of Tsui Hark's work and operatic morality plays of John Woo, it adopts a naturalistic style that suits the critical assessment of the corrupt games played between (and among) Hong Kong's police and criminals.

The film begins with a group of jewel thieves rooting out and murdering an undercover cop (Elvis Tsui) embedded among them, a crime they shortly follow with a bank heist that ends with them killing a uniformed police officer amid a chaotic getaway. (Lam shoots this violence without elaborate camerawork, instead lingering on gruesome, realistic details like the blood that spews out of bullet wounds.) With the city on high alert, a special investigations head, Inspector Lau (Sun Yueh), taps one of his undercover agents, Ko Chow (Chow Yun-fat), to infiltrate and take down the gang.

Released as Chow's star was on the rise thanks to hits like Woo's *A Better Tomorrow*, *City on Fire* complicates the rakish persona that the actor was cementing at the time. Outwardly, the cocky Chow maintains a flippant attitude, entering the film chewing on the ends of cigarettes like a western antihero and making passes at molls in clubs in full view of the mobsters who claim them. But this is a thin mask for a cop who's risked his life and gotten too close to some of his targets and who's now afraid, even ashamed, of his work. When Lau approaches Chow with the assignment, the detective's look of bravado instantly dissipates, replaced by a fidgety, almost whimpering expression as he all but begs to be spared.

And he has good reason to be afraid: Not only must Chow ingratiate himself with a gang that's already killed one undercover agent, he also finds himself targeted by a group of police officers who don't know his real identity and attempt to bust him as a supposed gun-runner... In a vicious bit of commentary, Chow ultimately finds more camaraderie and honor among the thieves than he does with his peers. In particular, he grows attached to Fu (Danny Lee), the man who killed the last cop embedded in the group... When the walls close in on the gang in the final act, Chow and Fu become bonded in a desperate show of mutual support – the depiction of which Quentin Tarantino would lift wholesale for *Reservoir Dogs* a few years later.

But where Tarantino's film hinged on the suspense of whether the cop's real identity would be revealed, *City on Fire* constantly focuses the increasingly bloody violence of the climax around the agony that each man feels for the other as they see doom on the horizon. Lam's film is set at Christmastime, a context that's milked for all its irony in the juxtaposition of Casio muzak renditions of carols blaring out from storefronts around town as things grow ever more violent. – Jake Cole, *Slant*



Tuesday 28 April at 6:15 pm

AFS AGM follows screening

Evil Does Not Exist Aku wa sonzai shinai Japan 2023

Director/Screenplay: Hamaguchi Ryūsuke
Producer: Takata Satoshi
Production co: NEOPA
Photography: Kitagawa Yoshio
Editors: Hamaguchi Ryūsuke, Yamazaki Azusa
Music: Ishibashii Eiko

With: Omika Hitoshi (Yasumura Takumi), Nishikawa Ryo (Yasumura Hana), Kosaka Ryuji (Takahashi Keisuke), Shibutani Ayaka (Mayuzumi Yuuko), Kikuchi Hazuki (Minemura Sachi), Miura Hiroyuki (Minemura Kazuo)

106 mins, Blu-ray. PG violence
In Japanese with English subtitles

Drive My Car director Ryūsuke Hamaguchi's *Evil Does Not Exist* begins and ends with the camera tracking through a forest, looking up. In the first shot, daylight streams through the canopy of trees; the mood is contemplative. The later shot feels decidedly grimmer: night is settling in, and the sky is a deep, dark, almost-black blue, the moon shining through a haze of what might be clouds or smoke, as we hear distressed breathing on the soundtrack. In between those two images lies a story that Hamaguchi tells in oblique, unassuming fashion, slipping in occasional moments of dreamy uncertainty so that his despondent, enigmatic, almost surreal ending takes us by surprise. This must be what it feels like to be the proverbial slowly boiling frog: everything seems normal, then it starts to not seem normal at all. And then, before we have a chance to fully realize it, our world is over...

The peaceful life of this village is interrupted with the arrival of two representatives from a talent agency that's planning to open a 'glamping' business nearby. In the film's most bravura scene, a pro forma slide presentation to a group of locals devolves into an extended confrontation when the villagers begin to ask questions about a variety of concerns, most notably the placement of the site's new septic tank, which is too small for the number of expected customers and also upstream from the town's fresh-water source. This is still a Ryūsuke Hamaguchi film, so the ensuing argument remains mostly understated; honestly, for a group of people who might be about to eat literal shit so that rich Tokyoites can pretend to rough it for a night, the citizens of Mizubiki seem admirably restrained.

Evil Does Not Exist rings unnervingly true in its particulars, from the bizarre bedfellows created by modern capitalism to the quiet contempt with which city folk treat poorer villagers...

Hamaguchi treats these matters with astute focus and realism. He doesn't give us obvious villains, instead portraying different people from different worlds, each trying to survive in their own way. Thus, we might not notice *Evil Does Not Exist* also has a strong undercurrent of dream logic running throughout. This element comes to the fore in the final act as a pall of despair takes over the film. We may not quite understand what's happening narratively in these later scenes – Hamaguchi pointedly makes it hard to tell what's a symbol, what's an illusion, and what's a flashback – but I suspect most of us will intuitively grasp what we're watching. In its own discreet, modest way, *Evil Does Not Exist* leaves us with a haunting sense of personal and ecological apocalypse.
Bilge Ebiri, *New York*



Monday 04 May at 6:15 pm

TOITŪ: Visual Sovereignty New Zealand 2025

Director: Chelsea Winstanley
Producers: Desray Armstrong, Chelsea Winstanley
Production co: Sandy Lane Productions, This Too Shall Pass
Photography: Mike Jonathan, Darryl Ward
Editors: Brendon Chan, Cushla Dillon, Huhana Ruri-Panapa
Music: Maree Sheehan

With: Nigel Borrell, Shane Cotton, Emily Karaka, Brett Graham, Taika Waititi, Charlotte Graham, Reuben Patterson, Shona Rapira-Davies, Elizabeth Ellis, Mere Lodge, Ani Iri, Maureen Landeer, and Mataaho Collective: Sarah Hudson, Terri Te Tau, Erena Baker, Bridget Reweti

101 mins, DCP. Exempt. In Te Reo Māori and English, with English subtitles

Toi Tū Toi Ora: Contemporary Māori Art was an exhibition years in the making and Chelsea Winstanley's (Ngāti Ranginui, Ngai Te Rangi) documentary *TOITŪ: Visual Sovereignty* is an astonishing account of how it came to be. *Toi Tū Toi Ora: Contemporary Māori Art* opened at Auckland Art Gallery in December 2020 and ran until May 2021. During that time it broke attendance records that had stood for decades, and it was widely expected the exhibition in its entirety – or near to it – would be taken to North America and Europe. The reasons why that did not happen are debated and contentious. But in 2024, several of the artists who had pieces included in *Toi Tū Toi Ora* did travel to Venice and exhibit at the Art Biennale. Winstanley's film takes us to both shows, and even finds a moment of triumph in 2024 to end on. But the focus of the film is firmly on the 2020 exhibition, and the events – and conflicts – that accompanied it.

The roots of *Toi Tū Toi Ora* stretch back at least to 1984, and the immense impact of the *Te Māori* exhibition. *Te Māori* had opened at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art in September of 1984 and had been an immediate success... To understand the scale and ambition of *Toi Tū Toi Ora: Contemporary Māori Art*, we need to understand the aim of the exhibition was to be a modern-day equivalent of *Te Māori*, but with taonga that had been created by contemporary Māori artists. To assemble the exhibition, curator Nigel Borell drew on his deep knowledge of 20th and 21st century Māori art and – with extensive consultation – put together a list of pieces that, when brought together, would fill the Auckland Art Gallery to the gunnels and have crowds flocking in.

But *TOITŪ: Visual Sovereignty* is not just a film about an exhibition. At the heart of the film is an ongoing discussion about the ownership – the sovereignty – of the individual pieces and the collection as a whole. About who has the right to speak on the artist's – and the art's – behalf. And about who will hold the pen that records the history of this moment. On one side of the discussion is gallery director Kirsten Lacy, at times looking very much as though she wishes she had stayed in Australia. While on the other side, Borell and a core group of artists are quietly but unequivocally outlining the tikanga – the ways/procedures – that must be followed if this exhibition is to properly represent the taonga and the history that has led these people and these objects to being together in these rooms. There are arguments and disagreements here, but Winstanley and her editors aren't interested in over-playing anything for dramatic effect, or in creating villains and heroes. This is documentary, not reality TV.

This is an intelligently and sensitively made film. The ideas and issues that it raises and examines are essential ones, and *TOITŪ: Visual Sovereignty* is a thoughtful, and extraordinarily beautiful, addition to the conversation. I loved this film, and I reckon it will reward a couple of viewings. – Graeme Tuckett, *Sunday Star Times*



Monday 11 May at 6:00 pm

Early start – long run time

Onoda: 10,000 Nights in the Jungle

Onoda: 10,000 nuits dans la jungle
France/Japan/Germany/Belgium/Italy/Cambodia 2021

Director: Arthur Harari
Producer: Nicolas Anthomé
Production co: Bathysphere, TBC
Screenplay: Arthur Harari, Vincent Poymiro, Bernard Cendron
Photography: Tom Harari
Editor: Laurent Sénéchal
Music: Sebastiano De Gerranro, Enrico Gabriell, Andrea Poggio, Gak Sato, Olivier Marguerit

With: Endo Yuya (young Onoda Hiroo), Tsuda Kanji (old Onoda Hiroo), Matsuura Yuya (young Kozuka Kinshichi), Chiba Tetsuya (old Kozuka Kinshichi), Kato Shinsuke (Shimada), Inowaki Kai (Akatsu)

167 mins, DCP. R13 violence & offensive language
In Japanese and Tagalog, with English subtitles

No man is an island, but for 29 years, until his final surrender in 1974, Hiroo Onoda came as close as any man could. Leading an ever-dwindling band of Japanese holdouts who refused to believe their nation had lost the war, Onoda continued to carry out minor guerrilla attacks on the residents of the small Philippine island of Lubang for almost three decades, until it was just him left, hiding in the underbrush, subsisting on a diet of zealotry and whatever he could scavenge or steal.

It's a famous, fabulously knotty, semi-surreal story, fraught with allegorical potential, but despite some length and pacing issues, it is somewhat surprisingly made, by French director Arthur Harari, into a potent, satisfying saga of old-school, muscular filmmaking. Part John Ford, part Sam Fuller, the film's old-fashioned approach is oddly impressive: To tell this kind of story in such blunt-edged, straightforward style is a distinctive choice when the temptation to veer into revisionist war-is-hell commentary, Malickian nature-study or Herzogian descent-into-madness bombast must have been strong.

Onoda is a film that describes rather than interprets, right down to Tom Harari's calm cinematography in which the caves, coasts and jungles of Lubang, however lush, are never lyricized, nor ever really favoured over the human dramas they backdrop. So while there is an uncanny prescience about our Fake News times in its observation of the man's creeping paranoia, conspiracy theorizing and towering self-delusion, for the most part *Onoda* is as much a throwback as its human-time-capsule hero was when finally, as a World War II soldier emerging blinking into a Watergate world, he came out from the jungle and laid down his arms.

Not that Harari, Vincent Poymiro and Bernard Cendron's screenplay covers Onoda's subsequent return to Japan. He was fated to become a kind of national reflecting pool – to be vilified, ridiculed and heroized as a symbol of lost values and vanished national pride – but Harari's film avoids similarly judging him by following his wilderness period with narrow, appropriately blinkered focus...

Harari's stocky, rugged, matter-of-fact approach describes in simple lines a sad little truth a more self-consciously artistic or romantic interpretation might gild: At the heart of this legendary story, that lends itself to such mythic ideas about hubris and honour, human conflict and the cruelty of nature, there just was a single, colossally misguided man scrabbling through the jungle, whispering strange little prayers over the places where, one by one, his comrades fell in sacrifice to a war only he was still fighting. – Jessica Kiang, *Variety*



Monday 18 May at 6:15 pm

AFS thanks The Surrey Hotel

The Cranes are Flying Letyat zhuravli USSR 1957

Director/Producer: Mikhail Kalatozov
Production co: Mosfilm
Screenplay: Viktor Rozov, based on his play
Photography: Sergey Urusevsky
Editor: Mariya Timofeyeva
Music: Mieczyslaw Weinberg

With: Tatiana Samoilova (Veronika), Aleksey Batalov (Boris), Vasili Merkurjev (Fyodor Ivanovich), Aleksandr Shvorin (Mark), Svetlana Kharitonova (Irina), Konstantin Nikitin (Volodya), Valentin Zubkov (Stepan)

95 mins, Blu-ray, B&W. PG. In Russian with English subtitles

After Stalin's death, one of the first filmmakers to emerge was Mikhail Kalatozov, his former head of production, a virtuoso technician who developed the 'emotional camera' – his term for the elaborate handheld takes that put his characters' feelings in purely visual terms. A child of the silent era, Kalatozov spent some time on assignment in Los Angeles during the war, and his late-period work culls from both influences at once, investing the Hollywood melodrama with simple stories, spare dialogue, and gloriously expressive images.

In recent years, Kalatozov's international breakthrough, 1957's Palme d'Or-winning *The Cranes Are Flying*, has been eclipsed somewhat by the unearthing of his 1964 propaganda film *I Am Cuba*, an outrageously beautiful (and beautifully outrageous) piece of pro-Castro Communist kitsch. But a new DVD edition should cement *Cranes'* reputation as a key post-war effort, both for its cinematic audacity and for its frank, moving depiction of families and lovers torn apart by violence. A movie star that never was, Kalatozov's captivating tragedienne Tatiana Samoilova matches his intensity and bravado as a young woman whose devotion to Alexei Batalov, her new fiancé, is tested when he volunteers to fight the invading Germans. Dealt a second blow when her parents are killed in a bombing raid, Samoilova moves into Batalov's family home, where she fends off the increasingly aggressive overtures of his cousin (Alexander Shvorin), a piano prodigy who used his talents to wiggle out of the draft. But as her letters to the front continue to go unanswered, Samoilova finds it harder to resist Shvorin's advances, even though she remains steadfast in her belief that Batalov will return when the war is over.

War melodramas don't get any more elemental than *The Cranes Are Flying*, yet Kalatozov has a way of making every cliché seem fresh again, if only by force of invention. Teary farewells and reunion scenes are old genre standbys, but there's nothing quite like the long shots of Samoilova searching for Batalov among the throngs of embracing lovers, or navigating intrepidly through a parade of departing tanks. Kalatozov lives for big dramatic epiphanies... At its best, *The Cranes Are Flying* could be watched with the sound off without losing any of its impact. A pure visual storyteller, Kalatozov conveys more in dizzying camera moves and bold swaths of light than words could express.
Scott Tobias, *AV Club*

Cranes' finale is one of the most emotionally moving ever. When Veronika finally finds peace with herself, it's in a vast crowd of Russians rejoicing in the return of their loved ones at the war's end... The honesty of the emotions evoked is overpowering. Even though it ends in a grandly collective gesture, Kalatozov's film isn't propaganda. Honest emotion tops political message-making at every turn. – Glenn Erickson, *CineSavant*



Monday 25 May at 6:15 pm

Letter Never Sent

Neotpravlennoye pismo
USSR 1960

Director: Mikhail Kalatozov
Production co: Mosfilm
Screenplay: Grigory Koltunov, Valery Osipov, Viktor Rozov
Photography: Sergey Urusevsky
Editor: N Anikina
Music: Nikolai Kryukov

With: Innokenty Smoktunovsky (Konstantin Fyodorovich Sabinin), Tatiana Samoilova (Tanya), Vasily Livanov (Andrei), Yevgeni Urbansky (Sergei Stepanovich), Galina Kozhakina (Vera)

97 mins, Blu-ray, B&W. Rating PG violence. In Russian with English subtitles

Kalatozov’s direction is readily identifiable by the way he conveys – or amplifies – emotional states through what can only be (inadequately) described as a kind of ‘total cinema’. Frequently collaborating with the brilliant cinematographer Sergei Urusevsky, Kalatozov created deep, exuberant, and highly mobile mise-en-scène, often employing elaborate tracking shots to create his effects. Seemingly unconcerned with scoring political points or even telling a particularly robust story, the frames of a Kalatozov picture, even at rest, overflow with feverish emotion. – Jaime N Christley, *Slant*

A four-man team is dropped by helicopter deep in the Siberian wild – three geologists and a guide. Their mission is to continue a search for diamond deposits that has been going on for several fruitless years... *Letter Never Sent* has things in common with any story of exploration, where circumstance can easily thwart the best laid plans of good men. The group’s reward for their hard work and success is to find themselves lost in a wilderness so remote that they might as well be marooned in outer space. Search planes can’t see through the heavy smoke clouding the atmosphere for hundreds of miles in each direction. They’ve lost most of their provisions escaping from the fire; when the cold closes in death will not be far behind...

That scenario would be exciting enough, but director Kalatozov and his *Cranes are Flying* cameraman Sergei Urusevsky overlay the proceedings with a physical-emotional landscape created from pure cinematics. The expressionist touches begin with filtered shots that darken skies and a trucking camera that turns a forest into a dizzying maze. Then come dramatic silhouetted images that isolate the diggers in their labor, seemingly pitting them against blowing leaves and trees bent by the wind. Finally, poetic superimpositions communicate the psychic states of the characters. Tanya rhapsodizes over the power of nature as the world spins around her, and Sergei’s aroused emotions are expressed with overlays of flames. When the real fire comes, resulting in similar special effects, it is almost as if the forest conflagration was sparked by overheated, unrequited passion. Kalatozov doesn’t go in for too much rapid cutting, but many of his pictorial effects indeed recall the achievement of Soviet classics from the 1920s.

Perhaps the film’s most beautiful sequences are romantic images directly reminiscent of *The Cranes are Flying*. While Andrei, Sergei and Tanya work out their irksome romantic issues, Sabinin writes his loving letters to a woman who has faith both in him and his dangerous profession. Vera’s ghost-like image visits Sabinin as a comfort-memory. The effect is beautiful but frightening... *Letter Never Sent* never has a chance to go soft and sentimental... *Letter Never Sent* declares that a life sacrificed to help one’s fellows is not a life wasted, even with an ending offering little in the way of a personal victory. – Glenn Erickson, *DVD Savant*



Tuesday 02 June at 6:15 pm

The Blue Angel

Der blaue Engel
Germany 1930

Director: Josef von Sternberg
Producer: Erich Pommel
Production co: UFA
Screenplay: Carl Zuckmayer, Karl Vollmöller, Robert Liebmann, Josef von Sternberg, based on the novel *Professor Unrat* by Heinrich Mann
Photography: Günther Rittau, Hans Schneeberger
Editors: Walter Klee, Sam Winston
Music: Friedrich Hollaender, Robert Liebmann, Franz Waxman

With: Emil Jannings (Professor Immanuel Rath), Marlene Dietrich (Lola Lola), Kurt Gerron (Kiepert), Rosa Valetti (Guste), Hans Albers (Mazeppa), Reinhold Bernt (Clown)

104 mins, DCP, B&W. PG low level violence
In German with English subtitles

No one in cinema history has ever smoked a cigarette quite like Marlene Dietrich. Without a hint of self-consciousness, she handles the process as if she’s been puffing since infancy, passing the cigarette through her fingers with uncommon fluidity and blowing luxuriant curls of smoke that cloud the lights like a special effect. While cigarettes didn’t carry her performances, they were the first cue to her otherworldly confidence and control, which she wields over her helpless suitors like a hammer ready to drop. – Scott Tobias, *AV Club*

In 1930, Josef von Sternberg and Marlene Dietrich became pioneers of movie sexuality with *The Blue Angel*, It was the first full-length German talking picture, and it fused the erotic and economic dimensions of ‘Weimar sexuality’ in all its decadence and despair.

It was directed by von Sternberg and written by him with dramatist Carl Zuckmayer and others, adapting *Professor Unrat*, the 1905 novel by Heinrich Mann. Dietrich is Lola, the alluring cabaret singer at a sleazy nightclub called The Blue Angel, and Emil Jannings plays Professor Immanuel Rath, the pompous but poignantly lonely middle-aged schoolmaster who is outraged to find smutty postcards of Lola in his pupils’ possession, storms into her dressing room to confront her and falls under her mischievous, sensuous spell. His motives for showing up at this den of iniquity had been of course entirely clear, as he boggled in private over the confiscated photos...

With her silver top hat and frilly underwear, Dietrich became world famous as she threw her head back in a gesture of extravagant abandon and breathily sang her keynote song about infatuated lovers fluttering around her like moths to a flame. In German, it’s: “Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuss/aus Liebe eingestellt” – “I am from top to toe, ready for love.” But in the more famous English-language version, it’s: “Falling in love again, never wanted to...”

This destructive eroticism can’t be understood without its economic aspect. What middle-class Germans feared above everything was a crash, a bout of hyperinflation that would wipe out savings and social standing that had taken a lifetime to build up. Erotic obsession was like this: a delirious, uncontrolled overheating and overexcitement that would cause the infatuated male in question to lose everything, winding up a pauper, like Rath in his grotesque clown’s outfit. And once the party’s over, the money’s lost and the humiliation has set in, what leader, what purifying force can rescue everyone from this devastating shame, while supplying something of the same erotic, exalting excitement? *The Blue Angel* is as fierce as ever. – Peter Bradshaw, *Guardian*



Monday 08 June at 6:00 pm

Queen Margot

La reine Margot
France/Germany/Italy 1994

Director: Patrice Chéreau
Producer: Claude Berri
Production co: Renn Productions
Screenplay: Patrice Chéreau, Danièle Thompson, based on the novel by Alexandre Dumas
Photography: Philippe Rousselot
Editors: François Gédigier, Hélène Viart
Music: Goran Bregović

With: Isabelle Adjani (Margaret of Valois), Daniel Auteuil (Henri de Bourbon), Jean-Hugues Anglade (Charles IX), Vincent Perez (La Môle), Virna Lisi (Catherine de’ Medici), Dominique Blanc (Henriette de Nevers)

161 mins, Blu-ray. R16 violence & sex scenes. In French and Italian, with English subtitles

Bloody, romantic, wildly operatic, *Queen Margot* is not for those who like their historical dramas well mannered...It’s *Romeo and Juliet* knee-deep in carnage, staged with Jacobean fury, lurid sensuality and high style by the recklessly gifted Chéreau. – David Anson, *Newsweek*

Chéreau nurtured the belief in a realistic interpretation of 16th century political machinations, tearing the heart out of historical romance, leaving the corpse of costume drama in its own pretty blood. This is a film that enters the dark soul with fury and conviction. Even love is stained with death... Not since Eisenstein’s imaginative expressionism has a film ravaged tradition and brought the past into focus with such devastating energy. Angus Wolfe Murray, *Eye for Film*

Tenderness fills Chéreau’s films both as safe haven and as weaponry. It can be found throughout *Queen Margot* (1994), Chéreau’s lone period epic, which is consistent in feeling with his works set in the present. *Queen Margot*’s tale of romance in a bloody era... opens in 1572, a decade into religious wars between the reigning Roman Catholics and the Huguenots (French Protestants). To make peace, King Charles IX (played by Jean-Hugues Anglade) has arranged a marriage between his sister Marguerite, or Margot (Isabel Adjani), and the Huguenot King Henry of Navarre (Daniel Auteuil). However, the siblings’ widowed and spidery mother, Queen Catherine de’Medici (Virna Lisi), has made other plans: Less than a week after the wedding, she orchestrates a massacre of the Huguenots on St Bartholomew’s Day. The death of thousands of Henry’s people suddenly thrusts him into planning how to survive, and bluntly forces Margot to choose between her birth family and her spouse.

She must also negotiate between her head and her heart. Not that she has given the latter to Henry; both newlyweds understand their marriage as a business arrangement. Rather, her soul yearns for the fugitive Huguenot La Môle (Vincent Pérez)... La Môle helps her turn away from the conquerors and toward the victims. Henry, witnessing his wife’s change, accepts her attachment to another; even as he himself comes to desire her, he seeks her trust over her body.

Though *Queen Margot*’s sound, sets, costumes, and camerawork collectively stun, Chéreau prioritized his actors, and he gave his ensemble ample freedom to perform. Adjani and Auteuil in particular engage in a delicate, uncertain series of movements together, standing off squarely at some points and collapsing united at others. Margot and Henry’s enmeshments lead them to play roles more important for each other than those of lovers: supporters. “Keep a light heart,” she assures him. “Pretend you are free.” In exchange for her strength, he strives to open himself – to her as she chooses to come to him, and to all those she loves. – Aaron Cutler, *Village Voice*

Early start – long run time



Monday 15 June at 6:15 pm

Dirty Harry

USA 1971

Director/Producer: Don Siegel
Production co: Malpaso
Screenplay: Harry Julian Fink, RM Fink, Dean Riesner
Photography: Bruce Surtees
Editor: Carl Pingitore
Music: Lalo Schifrin

With: Clint Eastwood (Inspector Harry Callahan), Harry Guardino (Lieutenant Al Bressler), Reni Santoni (Inspector Chico Gonzalez), John Vernon (Mayor of San Francisco), Andy Robinson (Charles ‘Scorpio’ Davis), John Larch (Chief of Police Paul Dacanelli)

102 mins, Blu-ray. R16

As the movie opens, a psychotic sniper calling himself Scorpio is terrorising the city, picking off innocent victims from rooftops, and demanding a huge ransom from the mayor and his cronies. Grizzled veteran Inspector Callahan (Clint Eastwood) is given the task of stopping him, but his somewhat unorthodox way of doing things quickly brings him into conflict with his superiors. You know the story.

Except, you don’t necessarily. Just as Eastwood’s previous collaborator – Sergio Leone – subverted the western with his own peculiar sensibilities, here Siegel consistently goes out of his way to mess with accepted cop thriller convention. The identity of the killer is revealed almost straight away – snivelling pervert Andrew Robinson – and even then, he is hardly the cunning criminal that most cops of Harry’s calibre have to face. Scorpio is a terrible serial killer; well, he’s pretty good at killing, but it’s only blind luck that stops him from getting caught by police no fewer than three times in the film’s first 30 minutes. Harry’s biggest adversary is actually the law itself, since Scorpio is captured at the film’s mid-point, but our hero’s disregard for due process and the killer’s ‘rights’ see him released back into society, the lawyers unable to find enough legally-gained evidence to detain him.

It is this aspect that gained *Dirty Harry* most of its notoriety when released in 1971; in particular, the sequence in which Harry tortures Scorpio to discover the location of a teenage girl he has kidnapped led to accusations of fascism. Again, time has blunted this angle somewhat – any movie cop worth his salt these days is a crusading bully with little interest in how well the criminals are treated – and to be fair, Siegel never truly condones Harry’s actions...

But away from all that, *Dirty Harry* remains a cracking police thriller, up there with *The French Connection* and *Serpico* as the decade’s best. Harry Julian Fink’s script crackles with wit, both the famous lines (“Do I feel lucky? Well, do ya, punk?”) and the nicely drawn relationship between Callahan and his fresh-faced partner Gonzalez (Reni Santoni), while Robinson’s memorably despicable killer and the off-kilter funk of Lalo Schifrin’s score are further reasons why this film is so loved. And above it all tower Siegel’s direction and Eastwood’s performance. Siegel was a director seemingly happy in any genre, and here he injects a gritty urgency to the story, delivering dynamite action and suspense sequences, and revelling in a dark brutality unheard of in cop movies of the era. And while on one level Eastwood may have simply taken the Man With No Name out of the desert, called him Harry and dumped him in the city, there’s little denying the iconic power of this performance. We may not find out much about Harry – we know his wife recently died, but that’s really it – but the mix of conviction and disgust with which he goes about his job say more than any number of speeches about the rights and wrongs of modern police work ever could. Daniel Auty, *The Spinning Image*



Monday 22 June at 6:15 pm

Hotere

New Zealand 2001

Director: Merata Mita
Producers: Merata Mita, Eliza Bidois Owen
Production co: Paradise Films
Screenplay: Merata Mita
Photography: Kerry Brown
Editor: Rongotai Lomas
Music: Hirini Melbourne

82 mins, Blu-ray. M adult themes

There are very few things I can say about my work that are better than saying nothing. – Ralph Hotere

The film, *Hotere*, is rooted in the awareness and earthy wisdom of Ralph Hotere. Ralph Hotere has confronted us with all manner of texture and material, on canvas, corrugated roofing iron, glass, stainless steel, through windows, with light and darkness, No 8 fencing wire, in installations, alone and in collaboration. To many he is a visionary with his finger on the pulse. Like his art, he is a man of ambiguity, allegory, beauty and complexity. Natural and religious symbols, the contradictions between sacred and secular, dark and light, are underlying themes, which serve the prophetic and aesthetic functions of his work.

It is left to us to turn the key to the door of communication in his works, on rectangular frames of celluloid, illuminated by shafts of pure light flashing through his black, and colour. The film does not view Hotere through labels. And it does not deny the spectator's right to respond, to challenge, to accept, to reject, to plumb the depths, to become involved. – Merata Mita

The opening of *Hotere* caught me blindingly off-guard with Brakhage-esque bursts of Hotere's paintings combined with brief snippets of other footage and what sounds like taonga puoro music. While the body of it is more conventional, it still defies standard documentary tradition: for one thing, it sidelines the spoken voice of its subject, heard only once during the film and then extensively during the credits where the traditional 'when/where' details are filled in.

This is just one example of Mita defying convention, and while certain stylistic touches (mostly musical) are 'dated', I was too entranced to care. To a certain degree, this will be impenetrable to non-Kiwis: if you don't know what the Springbok Tour is or means, the section on it won't shed much light, and the installation of a piece involving number 8 wire similarly carries a lot more weight to me than to those who stare blankly at that phrase.

But the fundamentals of Hotere's process, spirit, and life still would shine through, I think. I'm definitely being generous because I'm a Hotere fan (still thinking of flying to the South Island just to see the currently installed exhibition in Christchurch, though time is fading quickly), but I also think there's a lot more treasure here than I can access. (None of the reo lyrics, for instance, are subtitled, and Hotere uses reo frequently in his paintings.) And that's fine. I look forward coming back to this down the road, after I've read the recent biography, and gleaning more, but what's on hand more than satisfies even in my current state of ignorance. – Doug Dillaman, *Letterboxd*



Monday 29 June at 6:15 pm

Mississippi Masala

USA 1991

Director/Producer: Mira Nair
Production co: Mirabai Films
Screenplay: Sooni Taraporevala
Photography: Edward Lachman
Editor: Roberto Silvi
Music: L Subramaniam

With: Denzel Washington (Demetrius Williams), Sarita Choudhury (Mina), Sahira Nair (Young Mina), Roshan Seth (Jay), Sharmila Tagore (Kinnu), Charles S Dutton (Tyronne Williams)

117 mins, Blu-ray. PG coarse language

Nair has no interest in the simple race conflicts this storyline usually causes. Instead, she shows a world in which race is an elusive commodity. She does this by making every part of her film a masala, from its music to its actors, who come from a variety of ethnic traditions. This makes all her points without the need for exposition. – Nick Hasted, *Empire*

Mira Nair's sophomore feature, *Mississippi Masala*, lives at the intersection of disparate cultures. The twentysomething Mina (Sarita Choudhury) emigrated from Uganda to Mississippi as a child after General Idi Amin's 1972 decree forcibly expelled the country's entire Asian minority population. The young woman's extended family is one of many that arrived in Greenwood, Mississippi, under similar circumstances, leading them to grow into an extremely tight-knit community that runs nearly all of the motels in the small town. But the trauma of their forced displacement also resulted in an excessive insularity that's kept them almost completely disconnected from other communities.

That trauma especially looms large over Mina's father, Jay (Roshan Seth), who continues to petition the Ugandan government two decades later for the return of his stolen land. But Mina has her eyes set squarely on the future, especially after a chance encounter brings her into the orbit of the handsome, charismatic Demetrius (Denzel Washington).

Nair and screenwriter Sooni Taraporevala understand how Mina, like so many children of immigrants, is torn between the traditions of the past and the promises of her contemporary reality. Perhaps inevitably, given her background, Mina feels the pressure of her parents' dream of her marrying a well-off Indian man, and she almost instinctively knows that they will not approve of her interracial relationship...

No less specific is the film's depiction of the Black community in this patch of Mississippi... *Mississippi Masala*, though, is as equally and humanely attuned to the similarities between cultures as it is to their differences...

Beyond its vivid depiction of everything from colourism to culture clash, *Mississippi Masala* is bolstered by the chemistry between Choudhury and Washington. Choudhury, in her debut film role, perfectly modulates her performance between wide-eyed innocence and unquenchable yearning. The film, especially in a deliberately paced and sensuous sex scene, is profoundly alive to Mina and Demetrius's love for one another. Every flirtatious gesture, glance, and touch is spiked with the intense feeling of youthful desire. Derek Smith, *Slant*



Monday 06 July at 6:15 pm

Fallen Angels

Hong Kong 1995

Director/Screenplay: Wong Kar-wai
Producer: Jeffrey Lau
Production co: Jet Tone Productions
Photography: Christopher Doyle
Editors: William Chang, Wong Ming-lam
Music: Roel A Garcia, Frankie Chan

With: Leon Lai (Wong Chi-ming), Michele Reis (The hitman's 'partner'), Takeshi Kaneshiro (Ho Chi-mo), Charlie Yeung (Charlie), Karen Mok (Situ Hui-ling, 'Blondie')

99 mins, Blu-ray. M violence, offensive language & sex scenes
In Cantonese with English subtitles

Fallen Angels is an exhilarating rush of a movie, with all manner of go-for-broke visual bravura that expresses perfectly the free spirits of his bold young people... Indeed, *Fallen Angels* celebrates youth, individuality and daring in a ruthless environment that is wholly man-made, a literal underworld similar to the workers' realm of *Metropolis* – only considerably less spacious. Life proceeds at a corrosive rock music beat.

The Agent (Michele Reis), a beautiful young woman, has a problem. For some time she's had an ideal partnership with Ming (Leon Lai). She lines up hit jobs and Ming carries them out. As he tells us on the soundtrack, he loves his job because he's lazy. The Agent faxes Ming with instructions and he opens fire at the designated targets. Although they have little contact – and perhaps for that very reason – the Agent has fallen in love with Ming – just at the moment he's decided he's had to dig out one too many bullets from his body.

In the meantime, we meet Zhiwu (Takeshi Kaneshiro, who brings to mind the young Toshiro Mifune in looks and acting range), a handsome ex-con who tells us (also via soundtrack narration) that he's been mute since he lost his voice from eating bad canned pineapple at the age of 5. Zhiwu lives with his widower father (Chen Wanlei), a chef, with whom he has a loving bond. Zhiwu makes a living of sorts breaking into people's businesses after they're closed, then opens them up and sells to customers after hours. He breaks into a slaughterhouse, a barber shop and an ice cream van with equal glee – and exuberantly presses products and services onto a not always eager public.

Wong builds *Fallen Angels* to a graceful, beautifully orchestrated finale that at last melds his two stories romantically into one, as character collide with fate. Kevin Thomas, *Los Angeles Times*

Anyone who's seen *Chungking Express* will find it very hard to avoid comparing the two films: *Fallen Angels* has more offbeat humour, more spectacular action, more poignancy, more fragmentary wildness, and – though both films are fascinating to look at – takes more risks visually. Doyle often gets his camera right into the characters' faces – again and again, our attention is split between these magnified, foregrounded faces and the action unfolding in the rooms behind... Even more striking is a long monochrome scene in which two characters sit by a cafe window – the camera observes them through the rain-drenched glass, a shuttering technique casting the whole sequence as a series of seductively shimmering stills. And, as is so often the case with Wong, his choice of music for this segment is spot-on (the film features a Wurlitzer jukebox which has more screen time than many of the human characters). *Fallen Angels*... works best as a cumulative series of these transcendent, breathtaking sequences, building up to a final minute that must rank among the most remarkable and indelible in the whole of cinema. – Neil Young, *Jigsaw Lounge*



Monday 13 July at 6:15 pm

The Black Tulip

France/Italy/Spain 1964

Director: Christian-Jaque
Producer: Georges Cheyko
Production co: Mediterranean Film Productions, Agata Films, Mizar Movies
Screenplay: Henri Jeanson, Christian-Jaque, based on the novel by Alexandre Dumas
Photography: Henri Decaë
Editor: Jacques Desagneaux
Music: Gérard Calvi

With: Alain Delon (Julien de Saint Preux/Guillaume de Saint Preux), Vira Lisi (Caroline 'Caro' Plantin), Adolfo Marsillach (Baron La Mouche), Dawn Addams (Marquise Catherine de Vigogne), Akim Tamiroff (Marquis de Vigogne)

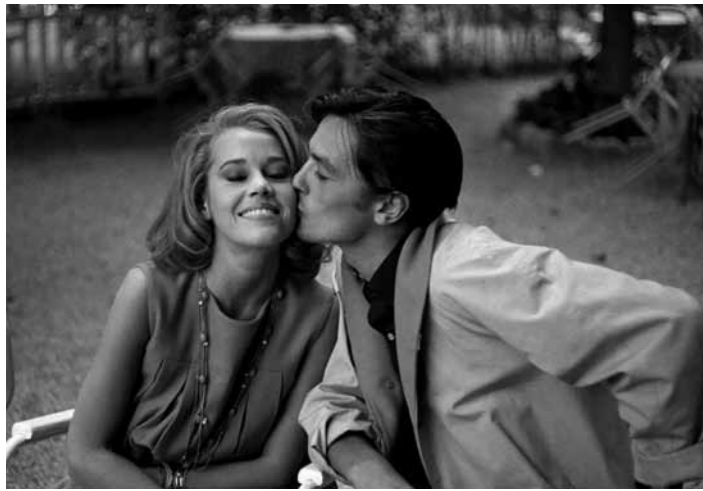
115 mins, DCP Rating tbc
In French with English subtitles

On the eve of the French Revolution in June of 1789, in the town of Roussillon, foppish aristocrat Guillaume de Saint Preux (Alain Delon) leads a double life as a masked bandit known as the Black Tulip. Since the Black Tulip only robs nasty, self-serving aristocrats the poor, oppressed peasants see him as a hero. The chief of security, Baron La Mouche (Adolfo Marsillach) is certain Guillaume is the man in black. When ambushed on the road, he scars Guillaume's face so he can expose him in public. But Guillaume calls on his younger brother Julien (also Alain Delon) to assume his identity and maintain the facade...

Supposedly Christian-Jaque was something of a taskmaster and pushed Delon to his limits but the results speak for themselves. With remarkable dexterity Delon differentiates between two brothers with very different personalities. While rakish, cynical daredevil Guillaume is full of swagger and bravado, Julien is far gentler, kinder and open-hearted, almost childlike in his idealism and honesty... The real twist is when Julien discovers Guillaume could not care less about aiding the oppressed peasants or the impending revolution. He is a self-serving scoundrel robbing rich folks for kicks. Appalled, Julien defies his brother and sets out to become the hero the people deserve.

In that endeavour Julien is greatly aided by a spirited young peasant girl named Caroline, known as Caro for short, played by Vira Lisi. Aside from being one of cinema's great beauties, Lisi was also a remarkably gifted actress. As such her character stands out from the stock damsels in distress more routinely featured in costume adventure films and has much more to do. Despite looking every inch a woman, Caro was raised like a boy. She can fight, tame a horse and outsmart bad guys as well as any male hero... The film proves equal parts drawing room farce as swashbuckling adventure, dealing with potentially dark material with a disarmingly light touch. Characters trade witty banter and are almost always laughing or joking and cordial towards even their most hated enemies.

As a director Christian-Jaque was routinely criticized for favouring light and breezy fare like this at a time when the Nouvelle Vague was redefining French cinema. Yet there is a lot to be said for his talent for maintaining a sense of playfulness and fun throughout this thoroughly agreeable romp. It is a skill that escapes many filmmakers that tackle the genre with next to no finesse. Filmed in sumptuous Super 70mm by the great cinematographer Henri Decaë, the spectacular scenery provides an epic backdrop for the dynamic swordplay and the whole production exudes panache and charm. They really don't make them like this anymore. – Andrew Pragasm, *The Spinning Image*



Monday 20 July at 6:15 pm

Joy House Les félins
France 1964

Director: René Clément
Producer: Jacques Bar
Production co: Cité Films
Screenplay: René Clément, Pascal Jardin, Charles Williams,
based on the novel by Day Keene
Photography: Henri Decaé
Editor: Fedora Zincone
Music: Lalo Schifrin

With: Jane Fonda (Melinda), Alain Delon (Marc), Lola Albright (Barbara), Sorrell Booke (Harry), Carl Studer (Loftus), André Oumansky (Vincent)

97 mins, DCP, B&W. Rating tbc. In French and English, with English subtitles

We’ve been trained nowadays to believe that if a mainstream movie is not a monstrous, definitive, top-heavy, eye-blasting, eardrum-bruising mega-event, it’s not worth seeing. Gone are the cultural aesthetics of the double bill (in which no one film was so commanding that it couldn’t stand to be immediately followed by another), the moviegoing habit (when diversion, charm and story were all moviegoers wanted, every weekend) and the notion of a film’s nature, like a person’s, being valued for modesty, lightweight pulpiness, empathic thrills in the moment and the pleasant company of beautiful and confident movie stars. Stuck in the summertime hell of superhero crapola and CGI migraines, it’s not hard from where I stand... to find relief in the forgotten matinee fodder of a less bombastic time. This week, it’s René Clément’s rather delightful 1964 suspenser *Les Félines* (*The Felines*), titled here (after the American pulp paperback it was based on, by prolific noiriste Day Keene) *Joy House*. There’s not much that’s earth-shaking about *Joy House* (except perhaps Lalo Schifrin’s pre-Jerry Goldsmith score). But it’s a movie in a way movies haven’t been in a long time: graceful, relaxed, fun-loving, unpretentious.

What you get is Alain Delon in his best persona – a ne’er-do-well playboy flitting around the Mediterranean looking for cash and ass, not unlike his Tom Ripley in Clément’s *Purple Noon* four years earlier. He’s targeted by a jealous American gangster... and escapes into the opulent Riviera clutches of icy widow Lola Albright (a stunning blonde from Akron whose résumé is otherwise comprised of cheap westerns and episodic TV) and her dewy, bubbly cousin-cum-maid, played by a pristine 26-year-old Jane Fonda at the onset of her French phase. Delon’s hired as a chauffeur – the kind whose driving is seriously impeded by his penchant for hiding under the steering wheel whenever gangsters walk by – but both the chateau-owning widow and the adorable but possibly unhinged kewpie doll have other cat-and-mouse plans for the wandering hunk, and it’s got to do with murder, swapped identities, set-ups, and so on.

It’s the kind of American pulp French filmmakers have always loved: the kind in which not one character has an iota of honesty or morality to them. This is my idea of escapism, hanging in an absurd vacation-France inhabited by nuns and sex kittens, digging the redoubtable chemistry between Fonda and Delon, enjoying the stars’ indulgent wallow in the Riviera as I’m also casually and effortlessly following the not-too-fast narrative without the benefit of a single optical effect or a single moment where the film insists on ‘making’ me ‘feel’ the action. (When an on-the-run Delon hazardously flags down a passing truck, Clément hangs back and just watches the actor literally leaps on the grill.) *Joy House* is not a great film (it’s not as rich as the Patricia Highsmith-derived *Purple Noon*), but it is pure movieness, un-self-important and respectful and sweet... Michael Atkinson, *IFC.com*



Monday 17 August at 6:00 pm

Kwaidan Kaidan
Japan 1964

Director: Kobayashi Masaki
Producer: Wakatsuki Shigeru
Production co: Ninjin Club
Screenplay: Mizuki Yoko, based on the stories by Koizumi Yakumo (Lafcadio Hearn)
Photography: Miyajima Yoshio
Editor: Sagara Hisashi
Music: Takemitsu Tōru

With: *The Black Hair*: Mikuni Rentarō (Samurai), Aratama Michiyo (The first wife), Watanabe Misako (The second wife). *The Woman of the Snow*: Nakadai Tatsuya (Minokichi), Kishi Keiko (Yuki-onna). *Hoichi the Earless*: Nakamura Katsuo (Hoichi the Earless), Tamba Tetsurō (Samurai). *In a Cup of Tea*: Nakamura Kan’emon (Kannai), Takizawa Osamu (Narrator)

183 mins, Blu-ray. PG violence. In Japanese with English subtitles

One of the most meticulously crafted supernatural fantasy films ever made, Masaki Kobayashi’s *Kwaidan* (1964) is also one of the most unusual. While such classic black and white chillers as *The Uninvited*, *The Innocents* and *The Haunting* teasingly speculate on the existence of ghosts, this lavish widescreen and colour production deals with the spirit world head-on, as something completely and frighteningly real.

Consisting of four episodes, *Kwaidan* is based on the writings of Lafcadio Hearn, a folklorist of Greek-Irish ancestry who came to the United States in 1869 and later moved to Japan. Hearn became a naturalized Japanese citizen in 1895, and changed his name to Yakumo Koizumi... As directed by Kobayashi, Hearn’s four tales unfurl across the screen like versions of the classic Japanese paintings of the historical periods in which the film is set... *Kwaidan* is about as far from moviemaking ‘realism’ as it’s possible to go. Yet in going to such dramatically ambitious lengths as adapting aspects of Kabuki and Bunaraku puppet theatre to filmmaking techniques, Kobayashi achieves a subtle synthesis of realism and stylization. He makes palpable a vision in which beauty and horror not only coexist but complement one another. – David Ehrenstein, *Criterion Collection*

Director Masaki Kobayashi (1916-1996) first achieved notoriety with the ten-hour *Human Condition* trilogy (1958-1961) about a pacifist soldier in World War II... While Kobayashi remained a politically engaged filmmaker throughout his career, in the Sixties he directed three period dramas that really enabled him to showcase his stylistic mastery: *Harakiri/Seppuku* (1962), *Kwaidan* and *Samurai Rebellion* (1967). *Kwaidan* was shot almost entirely on studio sets, enabling Kobayashi to maintain precise control over the color and overall visual design. For example, one character walks over a blood-red stream in “Woman in the Snow” episode. Similarly, the battle sequence in “Hoichi the Earless” uses a restricted colour scheme and a semi-abstract set that evokes traditional Japanese painting. The startlingly artificial painted backgrounds visible in many sequences at once emphasize the studio-bound nature of the film and recall traditional Japanese theatre. *Kwaidan*’s extraordinary use of colour and overall visual design very likely influenced Akira Kurosawa’s later use of stylized colour schemes in film such as *Dodes’ka-den* (1970), *Kagemusha* (1980), *Ran* (1985) and *Dreams* (1990). In particular, one can see clear connections between *Ran* and the battle sequence in the “Hoichi the Earless” episode.

In a 1972 interview with scholar Joan Mellen, Kobayashi pointedly took issue with the characterization of *Kwaidan* as a horror film: “My main intention was to explore the juxtaposition between man’s material nature and his spiritual nature, the realm of dream and aspiration. I wanted to create a drama which dealt directly with the spiritual importance of our lives. I also enjoyed conveying the sheer beauty of traditional Japan.” – James Steffen, *Turner Classic Movies*



Monday 24 August at 6:15 pm

Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror
Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens
Germany 1922

Director: FW Murnau
Producers: Enrico Dieckmann, Albin Grau
Production co: Prana Film
Screenplay: Henrik Galeen, based on the novel *Dracula* by Bram Stoker
Photography: Fritz Arno Wagner, Günther Krampf

With: Max Schreck (Count Orlok), Gustav von Wangenheim (Thomas Hutter), Greta Schröder (Ellen), Georg H Schnell (Harding), Ruth Landshoff (Ruth), Gustav Botz (Professor Sievers), Alexander Granach (Knock), John Gottowt (Professor Bulwer)

94 mins, DCP, B&W, Silent. M violence

Nosferatu is an adaptation of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, in all but name, with the action transferred to Germany. Max Schreck is the snaggle-toothed vampire Orlok, the young and preternaturally talented FW Murnau sits in the director’s chair. The movie was produced and designed by Albin Grau, an artist with a keen interest in the occult. And it’s brilliant: both beautiful and terrifying. A horrific spooky story, with eerie contemporary import. Remember that Europe has just come out the other side of a world war and a brutal flu epidemic, then look again at the devastation wreaked by Orlok here. – Pamela Hutchinson

It’s a testimony to the lasting power of FW Murnau’s adaptation of *Dracula* that, nearly a hundred years on, filmmakers are still borrowing the rat-faced look of its vampire villain and copying special effects, imagery and mythology from his movie. As the first real vampire film and the first adaptation of a much-remade property, it gets to invent things which have been done over and over so many times it’s too easy to forget they were once fresh... the peasants who cringe and cross themselves when the naïve traveller mentions whose castle he is going to visit... camera tricks to convey the monster’s supernatural swiftness or powers over beasts and inanimate objects... crumbling old buildings to externalise the grotesque shabbiness of the central menace... the cut finger that excites the repulsive host’s almost erotic attention... the half-seen creature murdering the ship’s crew one by one... the creature dissolving at first light of dawn.

Some (but not all) of these things come from Bram Stoker, but Murnau – and his collaborators producer/designer Albin Grau and screenwriter Henrik Galeen – found ways of putting them on film which still resonate. Several elements the filmmakers added have stuck to the property ever since, starting with the vampire’s streak of doomed romance (he is destroyed because of his fixation on the self-sacrificing heroine) and extending to his special effects-assisted death at the first light of dawn. The talon-brandishing, fang-flashing, swollen-skulled, hairy-eared Graf von Orlok, played by Max Schreck in still-remarkable make-up (note also the cinched waist and padded shoulders of his frock coat, which give him an insect-like thorax), is perhaps the only screen Dracula to be primarily a terrifying, gruesome, unnatural presence – most subsequent versions make the Count at least superficially suitable for drawing room hand-kissing and polite chit-chat to contrast with the throat-rending, but Orlok scuttling from the shadows like something you’d really like to see back under its rock.

Schreck gives a subtle performance under the make-up, whereas Alexander Granach (in the Renfield role) is clownishly over-the-top, pathetic when pursued by the mob whose worst instincts have been brought out by the mere presence of the plague-spreading fiend. Made before anyone had an idea of what a horror film was, this crystallised how the genre at its best works – it’s frightening and fantastical, but also incisive in its understanding of obsession, cruelty and heroism. – Kim Newman



Monday 31 August at 6:15 pm

Age of Panic La bataille de Solférino
France 2013

Director/Screenplay: Justine Triet
Producer: Emmanuel Chaumet
Production co: Ecce Films
Photography: Tom Harari
Editor: Damien Maestraggi

With: Laetitia Dosch (Laetitia), Vincent Macaigne (Vincent), Arthur Harari (Arthur), Virgil Vernier (Virgil), Marc-Antoine Vaugois (Marc), Jeane Ara-Bellanger (Jeane)

94 mins, Blu-ray. Rating tbc. In French with English subtitles

The tumultuous, hotly contested 2012 French presidential election, pitting right-winger Nicolas Sarkozy against socialist Francois Hollande, provides the larger maelstrom against which a couple’s custody battle unfolds in Gallic helmer-scribe Justine Triet’s frantic farce *Age of Panic*. The exes’ skill at sweeping lovers, friends, colleagues, babysitters and total strangers into their emotional vortex adds greatly to the absurdity wending its way through the streets, packed to bursting with masses of warring party enthusiasts...

The day begins in total chaos. Television reporter Laetitia (Laetitia Dosch) is on the phone with her boss, explaining why she’s late in covering the elections, while her little daughters scream at the top of their lungs and her overly helpful bf Virgil (Virgil Vernier), gives officious instructions to clueless babysitter Marc (Marc-Antoine Vaugois). Amid all this clamour, Laetitia’s excitable ex-husband, Vincent (Vincent Macaigne), shows up outside, demanding visitation with his kids, although he is a day late and legally constrained to visit only in her presence. She instructs the babysitter not to let him in, and takes off...

Shot in the thick of the election, on streets filled wall-to-wall with people as far as the eye can see, Triet’s film frames much of the action within jostling crowds as Laetitia sets up for a direct feed. Meanwhile, back at the apartment, Marc proves unequal to Vincent’s blandishments and reluctantly lets the distraught father inside, phoning Laetitia mid-broadcast to fill her in. Stressed beyond logic, she instructs the babysitter to bring the kids to the demonstrations.

With all the main players now on the battlefield (the French title of the film is *La Bataille de Solférino*, referring to both the 19th-century French/Austrian conflict and Rue de Solférino, the street where the political action unfolds), Triet tracks her characters as they attempt to impose their will upon one another, pushing and shoving amid the greater political tug-of-war. A frazzled Laetitia... must constantly regroup to turn a poised face to the camera and pay attention to news events transpiring around her. It all leads back to Laetitia’s apartment, where Vincent’s law-student friend Arthur (Arthur Harari) winds up serving as de facto legal authority; the arguments are reprised with inventive venom interspersed with bursts of rationality, until some semblance of accord is finally reached, more through exhaustion than anything else.

Triet brilliantly orchestrates the intersection of documentary and fiction. If reality fails to furnish the kind of drama that made Haskell Wexler’s *Medium Cool* such a benchmark, the spontaneous ebb and flow of the enormous French crowds seen here synchs visually and rhythmically with the film’s domestic Sturm und Drang, acted throughout with improvisatory immediacy. Although Drosch’s Laetitia acts out the precarious pressures of the harassed career mom with considerable brio, it is Macaigne’s Vincent, almost psychotically internalizing the panic of his 30-something generation, that lingers in the mind; indeed, the downbeat, dirty-haired Macaigne seems to be emerging as French indie cinema’s newest neurotic loser par excellence. – Ronnie Scheib, *Variety*



Monday 07 September at 6:15 pm

Dogtooth Kynodontas
Greece 2009

Director: Yorgos Lanthimos
Producers: Iraklis Mavroidis, Athina Rachel Tsingari, Yorgos Tsourgiannis
Production co: Boo Productions
Screenplay: Yorgos Lanthimos, Efthymis Filippou
Photography: Thimios Bakatakis
Editor: Yorgos Mavropsaridis

With: Christos Stergioglou (Father), Michelle Valley (Mother), Angeliki Papoulia (Older Daughter), Christos Passalis (Son), Mary Tsoni (Younger Daughter), Anna Kalaitzidou (Christina)

97 mins, Blu-ray. R18 violence & sex scenes. In Greek with English subtitles

“We accept the reality of the world which we are presented,” says Ed Harris’ reality-TV puppetmaster in *The Truman Show*. And just as his star comes to accept the narrow parameters of his surroundings, so too do the three grown children of Giorgos Lanthimos’ brilliant isolationist parable *Dogtooth*. Cooped up in a remote country estate, unable to see beyond the tall wooden fence around their lawn, these three unnamed young adults... have had their knowledge of the world dictated entirely by their parents, who feed them false information and find ways to instill anxiety about the terrors lurking outside their property. Their lives are under quarantine, contained by lies – some small and hilariously improvised, like a made-up language that defines ‘zombies’ as little yellow flowers, and others more insidious, like a made-up fourth sibling whose unfortunate demise is meant to serve as a cautionary tale. Truth, in this scenario, is a devastating virus.

Dogtooth could be read as a movie about parenting. All parents, no matter how noble or dubious their intentions – and the parents here, played by Christos Stergioglou and Michele Valley, are plainly psychotic – act as filters of information, and that’s naturally going to lead to some distortion. Yet as children age, they become more curious and independent – not to mention blitzed by hormones – and the control parents might have exerted earlier in life starts to fade. Stergioglou and Valley have raised three seriously infantilized adults, but *Dogtooth* opens at a point where their influence has weakened, and the film evolves into a tense, disturbing, often savagely funny struggle between chaos and control.

While Lanthimos doesn’t make any specific political allusions, *Dogtooth* carries a lot of resonance in the Glenn Beck era, when people are living in paranoid bubbles of their own making, bunkered down by ideology. The film’s provocative conceit and the cold-blooded precision of its violence recall Michael Haneke, particularly *Funny Games* and *Time Of The Wolf*, but Lanthimos has a prankish sense of humor, and favors an offhand absurdity that aligns him closer to Luis Buñuel. As *Dogtooth’s* carefully cultivated fictional world begins to unravel, the fallout accelerates too fast for anyone on screen to cope. The truth goes hand-in-glove with a feeling of blind panic. It’s an exhilaratingly unpredictable experience, and not an easy one to shake. – Scott Tobias, *AV Club*

The claustrophobic comic nightmare is all the more intense because everything is made to seem routine, almost normal... Lanthimos keeps us guessing and explains virtually nothing... The extraordinarily disciplined acting shows an ensemble united by a spirit of adventure, a commitment to follow this wild Theatre of Cruelty farce to whatever extremes it leads. You could mention Buñuel, Haneke, Atom Egoyan and *Sweetie*-era Jane Campion by way of comparison, but *Dogtooth* is pretty much one of a kind. Jonathan Romney, *Independent*



Monday 14 September at 6:00 pm Early start – long run time

Godland Vanskabte land
Denmark/Iceland/France/Sweden 2022

Director/Screenplay: Hlynur Pálmason
Producers: Eva Jakobsen, Mikkel Jersin, Katrin Pors, Anton Máni Svansson
Production co: Snowglobe Films, Garagefilm International
Photography: María von Hausswolff
Editor: Julius Krebs Damsbo
Music: Alex Zhang Hung-tai

With: Elliott Crosset Hove (Lucas), Ingvar Eggert Sigurðsson (Ragnar), Jacob Lohmann (Carl), Vic Carmen Sonne (Anna), Ída Mekkin Hlynisdóttir (Ída)

143 mins, Blu-ray, B&W. M violence, nudity & content that may disturb
In Danish and Icelandic, with English subtitles

After the international acclaim for his second film *A White, White Day* (2019), Hlynur Pálmason returns with *Godland*, a film of extraordinary craft and power. The film’s considerable virtues, which range from breathtaking landscape photography to inhabited performances from a flawless cast, show Pálmason to be working at the height of his powers. Drawing inspiration from late-19th century photos of Icelandic countryfolk taken in a remote outcrop of the island, *Godland* centres on Lucas (Elliott Crosset Hove), a Danish priest and amateur photographer who has undertaken a trip across Iceland to establish a parish by the sea. To assist him in his arduous journey, Lucas enlists a Danish-Icelandic translator, various horse-boys, and a rough-edged guide, Ragnar (Ingvar Eggert Sigurðsson), with whom the mild-mannered preacher enters into a low-simmering feud....

Godland is immediately striking for the economy and delicacy of its aesthetic. Its opening tableau, in which Lucas seeks guidance for his forthcoming trip, is decorated sparsely; bleak daylight illuminates a table with a frugal dinner on it, at which an older priest cracks a boiled egg on his plate while dispensing advice. Over and over, Pálmason performs the minor miracle of making these sorts of everyday occurrences seem breathtakingly beautiful: in gorgeously tintured, boxy images that mimic early photography, the director transfigures reality. A little fly settling on Lucas’s eyelashes as he sleeps; drops of rain darkening a grey rock; the violet marbling of a riverside ridge; a posy in a small jug on a window ledge: these things and many more appear as so many elements of utter wonder in the film, because of Pálmason’s gift for composition, his way with colour and the poise of his edit, holding a picture long enough to draw us in. Two remarkable 360° shots stand out among a set of scenes of impeccable control: in one, Lucas lies wounded and vulnerable in a valley, while we observe the slow progress of nature, the shifting of evening light all around him; in the other, Pálmason paints a whole community on a festive day, to the tune of an accordion piece played by Ragnar. More miracles.

The film is suffused with a sturdy, Protestant beauty: so too is the good, bony face of Elliott Crosset Hove, who becomes gaunt and haunted as the story progresses... Hove beautifully conveys, in the stiff figure of this pallid man of faith, Lucas’s self-centred doggedness, and his mounting uncertainty about the world he finds himself in... *Godland* is singular in that it functions equally powerfully as a lacerating portrait of masculinity, a deeply considered essay on nationalism and the clash of cultures, or a travelogue that drinks in the godless wonder of Iceland’s stark beauty. It ends with a heart-stopping series of fixed shots, drenched with ever-changing colours, filled with the tactile texture of rock formations and brushy grass, while a choir extols the virtues of Denmark: here, the land changes every day, and the question of human belonging in this world seems a very folly. – Caspar Salmon, *Sight and Sound*



Monday 21 September at 6:15 pm

La Haine
France/Italy 1995

Director/Screenplay: Mathieu Kassovitz
Producer: Christophe Rossignon
Production co: Les Productions Lazennec
Photography: Pierre Aïm
Editor: Mathieu Kassovitz
Music: Assassin

With: Vincent Cassel (Vinz), Hubert Koundé (Hubert), Saïd Taghmaoui (Saïd), Marc Duret (Inspector Notre Dame), Benoît Magimel (Benoît), Abdel Ahmed Ghili (Abdel), François Levantal (Astérix)

98 mins, Blu-ray, B&W. R18 violence & offensive language. In French with English subtitles

The narrative spring of *La Haine* is the shooting of a young beur (a second-generation North African) by the police during the riots that open the film. His death in the hospital propels Vinz (Vincent Cassel), Hubert (Hubert Koundé), and Saïd (Saïd Taghmaoui) on an eventful journey through their suburban estate (cité) and then central Paris, ending in shocking violence. In the process, the film shows clashes between police and youth, and in one famous scene, two policemen sadistically molest Hubert and Saïd while a trainee officer watches. No wonder *La Haine* instantly, and despite Kassovitz’s denials, acquired the reputation of being antipolice. As the daily *Libération* reported, after the Cannes gala at which the film received a standing ovation, “uniformed police supposed to form a double ceremonial parade . . . ostentatiously looked toward the sea; in other words, they turned a hateful back to the team who made the film that hates them.” *La Haine* is punctuated by a ticking clock and by Hubert’s story of a man in free fall – Kassovitz’s metaphor for the banlieue as social time bomb...

In 1995, *La Haine’s* central black-blanc-beur trio made racial difference visible only to downplay it. Racist violence is a trigger for the film, but it rapidly disappears to make way for a consensus among the three friends, united in their social exclusion. *La Haine*, in this respect, was similar to the beur films of the 1980s. However, the racial situation in France has significantly changed since 1995, exacerbated by 9/11, with a rise in both anti-Arab racism and anti-Semitism. Very noticeably, the poor layers of society increasingly reject the traditional French (Jacobin) integrationist model, while the cités are perceived by many as recruitment grounds for Islamic terrorists. The banlieues... have seen a greater ghettoization, but this aggravated racial situation is a minefield that neither Kassovitz nor Sarkozy wishes to attempt to cross – all the more ironic since, as Kassovitz points out, they are both the sons of Hungarian immigrants.

La Haine thus continues to generate heated debate thanks to its close relationship with some of the most traumatic social and political events in contemporary France. The 2005 debates, as well as the continued popularity of the film, attest to its central place in French society and world cinema culture. At the same time, it would be wrong to see the film as only a phénomène de société. *La Haine* has had such an impact also because it is a brilliant film, with stylish widescreen noir photography and virtuoso camera work. It captured a young generation on the brink, caught between French culture and that of their parents, and in love with American rap music and cinema. Last but not least, it is blessed with three exhilarating performances, by Cassel, Koundé, and Taghmaoui. *La Haine* has social relevance, but it also possesses a raw energy and all the ingredients of a cult movie: a young director, attractive young stars, humour, violence, style – in one word, cool. *La Haine* speaks of France but succeeds in transcending the national borders. This visionary film elicits passion and provokes thought, and is that rare combination: a cult movie that is also a classic film. – Ginette Vincendeau, *Criterion Collection*



Monday 28 September at 6:15 pm

The Cats of Gokogu Shrine Gokogu no neko
Japan 2024

Director: Sōda Kazuhiro
Producers: Sōda Kazuhiro, Kashiwagi Kiyoko
Production co: Laboratory X
Photography/Editor: Sōda Kazuhiro

119 mins, DCP. Exempt
In Japanese with English subtitles

Nestled on the coast of southern Japan, about a 30-minute drive from Okayama, is the port town of Ushimado. It’s a relatively quiet place with less than 8000 human residents, and – in 2021 at least – about 30 feral felines. The stray cats predominantly reside at the Gokogu Shrine, at the top of a large hill that overlooks the harbour, and are the result of abandoned pets being left to fend for themselves over many years. For the most part, the cats and human residents have learned to coexist peacefully, but their presence is the source of some debate among the townspeople. Some believe the cats could be good for tourism in a town with few economic prospects. Others feel the cats are unsanitary, and their presence contributes to litter and potentially more abandoned animals, as ignorant owners feel adding another cat to the population won’t make any difference.

Kazuhiro Soda’s observational documentary records these conflicts, as well as the daily lives of both feline and human residents, during a single year... The city of Setouchi (which incorporates the towns of Ushimado, Oku and Osafune) has funded a trap, neuter, release programme for the Gokogu cats, which sees volunteers attempt to curtail the breeding of the existing colony, while also providing food and medical treatment. The idea is that with no new kittens being born, the population will decrease year on year, until “One day there will be no cats left,” as a local reflects sombrely.

While some of the elderly community welcome the eventual end of Gokogu’s feral cat population, others will miss their presence. A few regular visitors come to the town to feed and socialise with the cats – one young woman takes care to wipe their dirty faces, and is worried because she can’t find her favourite cat (Uchi, which means cow, as he’s black and white). She explains she loves cats but isn’t allowed one in her rented apartment. “I come here to heal,” she tells Soda. Meanwhile, the small harbour is shared between retirees who spend their days fishing, and the cats who eagerly await a share of the day’s catch. One ginger cat is particularly adept at stealing the fish that are given to them. The camera follows her as she slinks away, fish in mouth, to give the food to her two young kittens...

Immanuel Kant once said “We can judge the heart of a man by his treatment of animals” and the sentiment rings true in *The Cats of Gokogu Shrine*, where humans and nature must try to co-exist as best they can. Yet there’s an underlying melancholy about the film too, as old-timers reflect on how the town seems to have been left behind in urbanisation, and the cat population begins to dwindle due to the success of the neutering programme. The film ends with title cards that show the human and feline residents of the town who have passed away since filming, underscoring the passage of time and the inevitable changes to Ushimado’s landscape. Soon there might not be any cats left at Gokogu Shrine, but the lives they have touched remain, and Soda’s sparing, sweet film is a gorgeous tribute to the independent felines, and the kind people who lived in harmony with them. – Hannah Strong, *Little White Lies*



Monday 05 October at 6:15 pm

Ratcatcher

UK 1999

Director/Screenplay: Lynne Ramsay
 Producer: Gavin Emerson
 Production co: Pathé Pictures, BBC Films
 Photography: Alwin H Kuchler
 Editor: Lucia Zucchetti
 Music: Rachel Portman

With: William Eadie (James Gillespie), Tommy Flanagan (George Gillespie), Mandy Matthews (Anne Gillespie), Michelle Stewart (Ellen Gillespie), Lynne Ramsay Jr (Anne Marie Gillespie), Leanne Mullen (Margaret Anne)

93 mins, Blu-ray. M offensive language & sexual themes

Ratcatcher, the brilliant directorial debut of Lynne Ramsay, is a gorgeous blend of beauty and squalor, packed with imagery that will play over and over in your head for weeks. It begins with a boy named Ryan spinning while wrapped in his mother's curtains, the cream-colored lace covering his face like a shroud, and the scene shifts from slow motion to real time as his mother angrily pulls him out of the fabric. It's one of the many deft pieces of foreshadowing that Ms Ramsay allows to seep through the film, the story of 12-year-old James (William Eadie) during a few weeks of his life in the early 1970s.

The movie takes place while a garbage strike in Glasgow leaves the streets lined with festering piles of refuse. "Somebody's chucked out a perfectly good dog," notes a teenage boy as he inspects an animal's carcass, while rats of all sizes – and the filmmaker uses them for several purposes – dart through the fetid landscape... Her actors have an awe-inspiring openness to the camera that gives the movie a magnetic realism; with the exception of Mr Eadie, the characters have nothing to hide, and trained actors are seldom so exposed. But it's a warped realism because each detail is in place...

The power of *Ratcatcher* comes from its hushed lyricism and Ms Ramsay's talent for conveying emotional complexity. Despite the setting, it is sweet and soulful, with a confident lightness of touch that allows for pinpoint shifts of mood. Perhaps the reason Ms Ramsay uses children as her protagonists is for their fleetness of expression; they move from one state to another very quickly...

One of the best scenes involves James's relationship with Margaret Anne (Leanne Mullen), the kind of girl who used to be described as easy. It's not what he desires of her, and at one point they play in the tub, scrubbing each other's infected scalps. Afterward, they sit in front of the television set, wrapped in towels while eating sandwiches, like the most innocent married couple in the world.

Rachel Portman's score, one of her best, is so spare it's barely there, yet it registers powerfully. The sound design is specific and minimal, adding to the feeling that the picture is wrapped in a constant dreaminess, like that lace curtain at the beginning. (There are also several other transitions from slow motion to normal speed to deepen that facet.)

Ratcatcher isn't all nightmare, either. James keeps visiting a new housing development – a place the family longs for – and he sits silently, happily, in an empty new tub. As he plays in a vast field behind the uninhabited home, he is seen through a window with bright blue skies and warm yellow grass in a big black frame. The sequence is proof of Ms Ramsay's bewitching eye and imagination, and *Ratcatcher* is the most lovely debut in a long time. Elvis Mitchell, *New York Times*



Monday 12 October at 6:15 pm

Boat People

Hong Kong 1982

Director: Ann Hui
 Producer: Xia Meng
 Production co: Greenworld
 Screenplay: Dai An-ping
 Photography: Wong Chu-kei
 Editor: Kin Kin
 Music: Law Wing-fai

With: George Lam (Akutagawa Shiomi), Season Ma (Cam Nuong), Andy Lau (To Minh), Jia Mei-ying (Le Van Quyen), Guo Jun-yi (Van Lang), Lin Shu-jing (Comrade Vu), Cora Miao (Nguyen's Mistress)

109 mins, Blu-ray. Rating tbc
 In Cantonese, Vietnamese and Japanese, with English subtitles

The first line we hear in *Boat People* is a command – "Don't look at the camera" – spoken to a group of schoolchildren in 1978 Vietnam. They're beautiful, these children, beaming in their crisp white shirts and red scarves as they sing the praises of Ho Chi Minh and run a relay race through a watermelon patch. The camera they're not supposed to look at is being operated by Shiomi Akutagawa (George Lam), a Japanese photojournalist who's visiting the country as a guest of the Communist government. Its hope is that he'll help show the world the joy and prosperity of life in Vietnam's New Economic Zones, regions of undeveloped countryside to which hundreds of thousands have been relocated by the regime. It is, of course, a seductive lie: days later, Akutagawa will slip back into this zone, this time without his camera, and see the stark truth of how these children, no longer smiling or singing, really live.

Well before it delivers that twist of the knife, *Boat People* (1982) – the fourth feature by Hong Kong filmmaker Ann Hui, and the third entry in her celebrated Vietnam trilogy – puts us on high alert. "Don't look at the camera," an order meant to deflect children's attention, has the exact countereffect of inviting the audience's scrutiny. Already during this early visit, it's clear that these idyllic sights have been orchestrated for Akutagawa's benefit, even if he may not yet grasp the full scope of what is being hidden. "I don't want things arranged for me," he says early on, requesting the cultural bureau's permission to wander off on his own. And so we follow him into the streets of Da Nang, where signs everywhere extol values like freedom and independence, but the injustices he witnesses – petty thefts and deadly explosions, a family evicted and loaded into the back of a police truck, strong-bodied men rounded up in crowded marketplaces and dragged away – tell a radically different story...

With quickening momentum and mounting fury, *Boat People* lays bare the conditions... that spurred hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese to flee after the fall of Saigon. Between 1975 and 1995, they set out in rickety, overcrowded boats bound for destinations like Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Hong Kong. Many perished at sea; those who survived found their lives changed forever, haunted by memories of what they'd left behind and overwhelmed by what awaited them in their not-always-welcoming new homes...

Decades later... *Boat People* looms ever more impressively as one of Hui's strongest films. It also seems an indelibly, unmistakably political work, less for its advancement of any specific movement or ideology than for its rejection of totalitarianism and its ardent defense of human rights. Above all, it's a film that regards the political and the human as inextricable – and urges us to do the same. – Justin Chang, *Criterion Collection*



Monday 19 October at 6:15 pm

Él

Mexico 1953

Director: Luis Buñuel
 Producer: Óscar Dancigers
 Production co: Producciones Tepeyac
 Screenplay: Luis Buñuel, Luis Alcoriza, based on the novel *Pensamientos* by Mercedes Pinto
 Photography: Gabriel Figueroa
 Editor: Carlos Savage
 Music: Luis Hernández Bretón

With: Arturo de Córdova (Francisco Galván de Montemayor), Delia Garcés (Gloria Vilalta), Aurora Walker (Doña Esperanza Vilalta), Carlos Martínez Baena (Padre Velasco), Manuel Dondé (Pablo), Rafael Banquells (Ricardo Luján)

84 mins, Blu-ray, B&W. Rating tbc
 In Spanish with English subtitles

A blasphemous black comedy, part noir, part case history, Luis Buñuel's 1953 Mexican melodrama *Él* amply justifies its inadvertently self-reflexive American release title, *This Strange Passion*.

The initial sequence, filmed in the nave of a 16th-century Mexico City cathedral, is a well-attended Holy Thursday Mass. As the camera lavishes attention on ritual foot-washing, so does the suavely aristocratic Francisco Galván (Arturo de Córdova). Then his gaze strays from the row of bare feet waiting to be washed and kissed by attending priests to a well-shod foot belonging to a well-bred señorita, Gloria (Delia Garcés) – and thus, a mad love is born.

Francisco, a wealthy, middle-aged virgin, obsessed with regaining ownership of once-upon-a-time family property, turns the force of his pathology on Gloria. He successfully woos her away from her fiancé and, starting on their wedding night, makes her life a living hell. Oscillating between insane jealousy and abject apologies (but ever aroused by the sight of her feet), he becomes increasingly abusive, mentally and physically. At one point, anticipating the climax of Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, he finagles her to the top of a mission bell tower and, suddenly enraged, tries to throw her off.

Throughout, the madman is protected by his wealth, defended by the Catholic Church and even by Gloria's mother. *Él* has been taken as a parody of machismo, but it is more pointedly an attack on social class, male privilege and the notion of bourgeois respectability... Adapted from a quasi-autobiographical novel by the Spanish writer Mercedes Pinto, *Él* was further informed by the antics of Buñuel's brother-in-law and, he's suggested, his own dreams.

Arriving in Cannes two years after Buñuel's triumphant comeback with the anti-neorealist slum drama *Los Olvidados*, *Él* was dismissed by many, including the jury president, Jean Cocteau, as a commercial sellout. The unimpressed *New York Times* reviewer, AH Weiler, termed the film "an elementary and uninspired study of abnormal psychology." (Still, no less an authority than Jacques Lacan considered *Él* to be exemplary, and the knowledgeable French critic Georges Sadoul recognized the film as an update of *L'Age d'Or*, the 1930 Buñuel-Dalí collaboration that incited a riot.

Él is so blandly outrageous that it is easy to pass over its affronts... Inevitably, Francisco's final break with reality occurs in the same church where the movie opens (and includes a physical attack on his family priest)... The revelations of the jolting postscript are all the more powerful if one knows that the cowed figure in the last shot is the director himself. – J Hoberman, *New York Times*



Tuesday 27 October at 6:15 pm

Phantom of the Paradise

USA 1974

Director/Screenplay: Brian De Palma
 Producer: Edward Pressman
 Production co: Harbor Productions
 Photography: Larry Pizer
 Editor: Paul Hirsch
 Music: Paul Williams

With: Paul Williams (Swan), William Finley (Winslow Leach/the Phantom), Archie Hahn, Jeffrey Comanor, and Harold Oblong (the Juicy Fruits/the Beach Bums/the Undeads), George Memmoli (Arnold Philbin), Gerrit Graham (Beef), Jessica Harper (Phoenix)

91 mins, Blu-ray. M violence

As its title implies, *Phantom of the Paradise* is a contemporary version of *The Phantom of the Opera*. This time the maimed and maddened musician, haunting the theatre whose owner has stolen his composition, has been transformed into a pop composer. His plagiarist in Brian De Palma's film has become an evil, omnipotent promoter of rock music named Swan. The theatre the Phantom haunts is no longer an opera house but a rock palace on the order of the old Fillmore. Phoenix (Jessica Harper), the woman he hopelessly loves, is now an aspiring pop singer. The organ the Phantom used to pound away on down in the sub-basement has become an electronic synthesizer.

But *Phantom of the Paradise* is much more than a bundle of neat, often amusing analogies. De Palma has something richer – and more relevant – in mind than parodying a theatrical property he knows is too old and, in its way, too good for mere camp treatment. He has borrowed the plot as a vehicle to satirize the whole corrupt, pretentious and self-important world of pop culture.

The work filched from the modern Phantom (William Finley) is a rock-cantata retelling of the *Faust* legend. In order to hear it properly performed, the Phantom, as well as his dream singer, must strike similar bargains with Swan, juicily played by Paul Williams, who also composed the film's good score. Swan in turn owes his power to an earlier Faustian deal of his own, a pact that borrows a few wrinkles from Dorian Gray's compact. This repetition reduces contemporary middlebrow mythomania to absurd shambles.

Not only does De Palma send up every known form of rock, from hard to glitter, but just about every other pop style this side of Glenn Miller. He pays homage to such movie masters as Alfred Hitchcock and Raoul Walsh by echoing a couple of their most famous scenes. Like Truffaut, he borrows hoary cinematic devices – the wipe, the iris and the optical montage – only to mix them with currently fashionable gimmicks like the split screen. De Palma's axiom is that in popular culture, today's wow is tomorrow's cliché and the next day's nostalgic treasure. The corollary is that our opinions in these matters are more often the product of cynical manipulators like Swan than of genuinely informed intelligence.

Indeed De Palma is particularly tough on the youths who invite people like Swan to swindle them. They are observed to grow as hysterical over a talentless transvestite swinger named Beef (played in the film's gaudiest comic turn by Gerrit Graham) as they do over the pure loveliness of Phoenix's voice. A wedding onstage turns them on, but so does an assassination...

The movie will be something of a downer for rock cultists who find that the real objects of De Palma's scornful (and occasionally too anarchical) satire are themselves and their false gods. Others will find *Phantom of the Paradise* a crazy, savage film – iconoclastic and truly liberating. – Richard Schickel, *Time*



Monday 02 November at 6:15 pm

Don't Look Now

UK 1973

Director: Nicolas Roeg
Producer: Peter Katz
Production co: Casey Productions, Eldorado Films
Screenplay: Allan Scott, Chris Bryant, based on the story by Daphne du Maurier
Photography: Anthony Richmond
Editor: Graeme Clifford
Music: Pino Donaggio

With: Julie Christie (Laura Baxter), Donald Sutherland (John Baxter), Hilary Mason (Heather), Clelia Matania (Wendy), Massimo Serato (Bishop Barbarrigo), Renato Scarpa (Inspector Longhi), Adelina Poerio (Dwarf)

110 mins, Blu-ray. M violence & sex scenes

“Time is always present.” So says director Danny Boyle about Nicolas Roeg on the new Criterion edition of Roeg’s 1973 film *Don’t Look Now*, and there’s no better or more concise description of Roeg’s sensibility. Events may move on a continuum, but our minds double back constantly – and in the case of *Don’t Look Now*, based on a Daphne du Maurier story, they jump ahead through spooky premonitions and extrasensory perception. For a British couple in Venice, desperate to shake off the guilt and grief associated with their daughter’s death, the collapsing of time serves as a poignant, terrifying reminder that such tragedies are not only inescapable, but can reverberate in devastating ways. The film isn’t easy to classify – it’s a psychodrama that occasionally sharpens into blood-curdling horror – but the experience of watching it is deeply unsettling, owed partly to its shadowy evocation of Venice in decay, but mostly to Roeg’s ability to keep haunting the present with the past. The images have an associative rhythm that reflects the characters’ consciousness, and disturbs the audience’s subconscious.

Roeg wastes no time in knocking viewers off balance, introducing key visual motifs – water, broken glass, a red raincoat – before the main characters have said more than a few words. On a rainy afternoon, a little girl in that red raincoat falls into the pond in her backyard; inside the house, John Baxter (Donald Sutherland) has a feeling that something terrible has happened, but by the time he rushes out to save her, she’s already drowned. Without dwelling for a microsecond on the immediate aftermath, Roeg whisks John and his wife Laura (Julie Christie) to Venice at some unknown time in the future – a month? a year? – where they’ve escaped to get their heads straight. John is busying himself with the restoration of an old church, but Laura’s face is still clouded with grief, making her especially susceptible to the visions of a blind seer she meets in a restaurant...

Had *Don’t Look Now* been told in a more conventional, straightforward way, it would have been shockingly banal... But Roeg is eager to scramble up the chronology, make visual connections between colours and shapes, and fiddle around with crosscut and montage sequences, and he makes a beautiful, terrifying puzzle out of it all. And while the overall tone is simultaneously mournful and spooky, he’s willing to break it up playfully, too: The sex scene, cutting between John and Laura’s vigorous lovemaking session and the two of them dressing for dinner afterward, would connect under any circumstances, but as the eye of an emotional hurricane, it’s particularly effective... John and Laura can leave the home where this tragedy happened, but that isn’t the same as escaping: One of the most romantic cities in the world becomes, from their perspective, a twisted psychic space full of catacombs and rot, driving them further into tragedy. It would all be unbearably sad, if it weren’t chilling to the bone. – Scott Tobias, *The Dissolve*



Monday 09 November at 6:15 pm

Mona Lisa and the Blood Moon

USA 2021

Director/Screenplay: Ana Lily Amirpour
Producers: John Leshner, Dylan Weathered, Adam Mirels, Robbie Mirels
Production co: Rocket Science, Le Grisbi Productions, 141 Entertainment
Photography: Pawel Pogorzelski
Editor: Taylor Levy
Music: Daniele Lupi

With: Kate Hudson (Bonnie ‘Bonnie Belle’ Hunt), Jun Jong-seo (Mona Lisa Lee), Craig Robinson (Officer Harold), Ed Skrein (Fuzz), Evan Whitten (Charlie Hunt)

106 mins, Blu-ray
R16 violence, offensive language, sexual material & content that may disturb

Like finding a grubby, balled-up bill in your spangly g-string and uncrumpling it to discover doughy old Ben Franklin staring benignly back at you, Ana Lily Amirpour’s third feature is a sweet, scuzzy surprise made all the sweeter/scuzzier because you don’t know quite what you did to deserve it. Certainly, at the Venice Film Festival – where *Mona Lisa and the Blood Moon* snuck into competition – giggling into one’s mask at its garish but gladhearted genre excesses felt like getting away with something naughty. At one point, Craig Robinson’s befuddled cop, trying to understand how he came to have a bullet in his knee after a mysterious encounter with the eponymous Mona, is told by a probably-charlatan New Orleans fortune teller: “You don’t pick voodoo, son. Voodoo pick you.” And this time, after following up her striking debut, *A Girl Walks Home Alone At Night*, with the derailed ambitions of the disappointingly half-baked “The Bad Batch,” movie voodoo definitely picked Amirpour, who delivers a film born howling – and winking – under a big, red Louisiana full moon. *Mona Lisa and the Blood Moon* is a blast.

As a slice of pure popcorn escapism, the film begins, appropriately, with an escape. In a padded cell in a mental institution out beyond the swampy, frog-loud bayou, a young Korean inmate who has been in a drooling vegetative state for a decade suddenly stirs. This is Mona Lisa Lee, played by Jun Jong Seo in a role far less delicate than that of the tangerine-peeling, disappearing girl in Lee Chang-dong’s 2018 masterpiece *Burning*, but somehow also fueled by her peculiar, enigmatic watchability. Mona hasn’t just regained awareness, she’s awoken with an inexplicable superpower that enables her to take over someone else’s motor functions, and to get them to physically do whatever she wants, even as their terrified minds remain their own...

The seedy energy of the nighttime streets, alleys, and strip clubs of New Orleans’ French Quarter infect the images with a restlessness that’s delivered rich and funky by Ari Aster’s regular cinematographer Pawel Pogorzelski. The camera is always nudging the story forward, onward, when it’s not spinning away from Mona, as though it’s a little afraid of her itself. But if the neon-slick images, the determinedly cheap and tacky costuming, and the pummeling soundtrack, filled with glow-stick house music and hard rock cuts, suggest that *Mona Lisa and the Blood Moon* is nothing but disposable trash itself, well, it sort of is. At the same time, the deceptive cutting rhythm of Taylor Levy’s editing finds within the film’s forward momentum plenty of opportunities to let a glance linger, or a performance beat breathe. And Amirpour’s script has a sentimental heart that sometimes thumps louder even than Fuzz’s pulsing house music, offering a strangely soulful and romantic outlook on this violent and venal demimonde. Jessica Kiang, *The Playlist*



Monday 16 November at 6:15 pm

3 Faces

Iran 2018

Director: Jafar Panahi
Production co: Jafar Panahi Film Production
Screenplay: Jafar Panahi, Nader Saeivar
Photography: Amin Jafari
Editor: Mastaneh Mohajer, Panah Panahi

With: Behnaz Jafari (Herself), Jafar Panahi (Himself), Marziyeh Rezaei (Marziyeh), Maedeh Erteghaei (Maedeh), Narges Delaram (Marziyeh’s mother)

100 mins, Blu-ray. M suicide references
In Azeri and Farsi, with English subtitles

The 20-year film-making ban imposed on Jafar Panahi in 2010 by the Iranian regime, incorporating six years under house arrest, has perhaps not panned out as his oppressors might have hoped... Like his last film, *Tehran Taxi*, which was confined to a car rigged with tiny digital cameras, the new one hinges on a road trip. Iranian cinema has a tradition of grappling with politics, morality and philosophy from behind the wheel – the late Abbas Kiarostami put the pedal ever so gently to the metal in *Taste of Cherry* and *Ten* – since the car is one of the few spaces that is both private and public at the same time. Dissent may be expressed there without fear of repercussions.

Panahi is the driver in *3 Faces*, as he was in *Tehran Taxi*. His passenger this time is the actor Behnaz Jafari, who also plays herself... Jafari and Panahi are on their way to a remote village in the north-west of Iran. They have received footage of a young woman, Marziyeh (Marziyeh Rezaei), who is distraught because her family has thwarted her dreams of becoming an actor. The video ends with what appears to be her suicide. Jafari is concerned for the girl but also worried that the footage might be bogus. As she and Panahi debate the authenticity of that film, we admire the verisimilitude of this one: the long takes that preserve the integrity of the action, the resourceful use of light sources (the bleak glow from a mobile phone, the glare of headlights when Jafari paces in front of the car) to keep the actors illuminated in unpromising conditions.

As they press on, the pair come across a series of clues and portents, doom-mongers and eccentrics. There is a wedding party on the outskirts of Marziyeh’s village – surely a good sign, since such celebrations would never go ahead in the aftermath of a death. A conversation with a woman lying in an open grave, on the other hand, bodes less well. It’s around this point that Jafari starts to lose patience: “It’s all a set-up! That girl is playing with us!” Next she wonders if Panahi has engineered the whole situation himself. After all, he was preparing a movie about suicide with a part in it for her. Could the odyssey they are on be the very same project?...

The villagers describe the girl as “an empty-headed brat” and claim that “we don’t want entertainers here”, while an old woman has been banished to the outskirts because of her own history as an actor. Male power and virility, though, are revered, whether embodied by a matinee idol or a prize bull (“Golden balls!”). A young boy’s foreskin, believed to contain magical powers, is treated with greater tenderness here than the life of a teenage girl.

In the final scene, the camera gazes out at two women padding along a winding country road, the tranquillity of the shot compromised by the cracked windshield through which we are viewing it. As with the rest of the film, it presents for our inspection a damaged image and asks: what’s wrong with this picture? – Ryan Gilbey, *New Statesman*



Monday 23 November at 6:00 pm

Early start – long run time

The Apartment

USA 1960

Wayne Weston Memorial Screening

Director/Producer: Billy Wilder
Production co: The Mirisch Company
Screenplay: Billy Wilder, IAL Diamond
Photography: Joseph LaSelle
Editor: Daniel Mandell
Music: Adolph Deutsch

With: Jack Lemmon (CC ‘Buddy Boy’ Baxter), Shirley MacLaine (Fran Kubelik), Fred MacMurray (Jeff D Sheldrake), Ray Walston (Joe Dobisch), Jack Kruschen (Dr David Dreyfuss), Frances Weintraub Lax (Mrs Lieberman)

125 mins, Blu-ray, B&W. PG

The Apartment is famous for its opening voiceover, in which, against a backdrop of stunning imagery which reminds us just how small he is, ambitious young clerk CC Baxter (“Everybody calls me Bud”) explains the system which is enabling him to impress his seniors – and which, every now and again, leaves him standing outside in the rain. Baxter (as he is actually known, in the absence of real friends) lends his apartment to company executives who need somewhere discreet to conduct their extra-marital affairs. He orders in the champagne, he makes the excuses, and he hopes for a promotion. But whilst his neighbours think they’re living next door to Casanova, Baxter is really lonely, isolated and beginning to feel it.

Everything changes when Baxter meets Fran Kubelik, the elevator operator whom it seems everybody in the company is out to bed. Reserved and delicate, Fran is reminiscent of Audrey in *Little Shop Of Horrors*, a universal object of desire who never thought she could appeal to a ‘nice guy’ like our hapless hero. Her appearance drastically alters the tone of the film. In essence it’s a slapstick comedy, but Fran is a human being, and as he falls for her Baxter gradually begins to question what he’s been enabling. The company is an entirely male dominated structure, with women in supporting roles desperately waiting for their lovers to divorce their wives, being passed around from one man to another with no hope of lasting happiness...

The Apartment touches on dangerous territory in several areas. It has a playful attitude toward the sexual mores of its day and it certainly doesn’t portray its female characters as uninterested in having a good time. In places its sexual jokes, played absolutely straight, must have presented a real challenge to the censor. Yet it is also deeply subversive on a social level, challenging the established way of living which has created such a damaging power imbalance....

The Apartment is a very funny film. It’s wittily scripted and inventively directed, a Billy Wilder classic. Even when he’s in the apartment on his own. Baxter’s interactions with the television keep us laughing. Some of the stereotypes are a little hackneyed now, but so much of this film still rings true that it has that sharp relevance which comedy needs to live and breathe. With finely judged performances from Jack Lemmon and Shirley MacLaine, it’s a great way to spend an evening, and it’s something you won’t forget about in the morning. Jennie Kermode, *Eye for Film*

This is the perfect rom-com, not because it’s light but because it’s dark... Such gritty material is infused with Wilder’s compassion and defined by two towering central performances. – Kevin Maher, *The Times*

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09 March 6:15 pm	RUN LOLA RUN Ω 80 mins, DCP. M violence & offensive language	20 July 6:15 pm	JOY HOUSE 97 mins, DCP. Rating tbc
16 March 6:15 pm	THE QUIET EARTH 91 mins, Blu-ray. M adult themes	29 July – 09 August	NEW ZEALAND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL Dates tbc. Discounts for AFS Premier Card Members
23 March 6:00 pm	Early start – long run time LA CHIMERA 131 mins, Blu-ray. M offensive language	17 August 6:00 pm	Early start – long run time KWAIDAN 183 mins, Blu-ray. PG violence
30 March 6:00 pm	Early start – long run time MONSTER 127 mins, Blu-ray. M	24 August 6:15 pm	NOSFERATU: A SYMPHONY OF HORROR* 94 mins, DCP, B&W, Silent. M violence
07 April 6:15 pm	Tuesday TRUE STORIES 89 mins, Blu-ray. PG	31 August 6:15 pm	AGE OF PANIC 94 mins, Blu-ray. Rating tbc
13 April 6:15 pm	HUMANIST VAMPIRE... 90 mins, Blu-ray M offensive language, horror & suicide references	07 September 6:15 pm	DOGTOOTH 97 mins, Blu-ray. R18 violence & sex scenes
20 April 6:15 pm	CITY ON FIRE 101 mins, Blu-ray. R18 violence	14 September 6:00 pm	Early start – long run time GODLAND 143 mins, Blu-ray M violence, nudity & content that may disturb
28 April 6:15 pm	Tuesday. AFS AGM follows EVIL DOES NOT EXIST 106 mins, Blu-ray. PG violence	21 September 6:15 pm	LA HAINE 98 mins, Blu-ray, B&W. R18 violence & offensive language
04 May 6:15 pm	TOITŪ: VISUAL SOVEREIGNTY 101 mins, DCP. Exempt	28 September 6:15 pm	THE CATS OF GOKOGU SHRINE 119 mins, DCP. Exempt
11 May 6:00 pm	Early start – long run time ONODA: 10,000 NIGHTS IN THE JUNGLE 167 mins, DCP. R13 violence & offensive language	05 October 6:15 pm	RATCATCHER 93 mins, Blu-ray M offensive language & sexual themes
18 May 6:15pm	THE CRANES ARE FLYING 95 mins, Blu-ray. PG	12 October 6:15 pm	BOAT PEOPLE 109 mins, Blu-ray. Rating tbc
25 May 6:15 pm	LETTER NEVER SENT 96 mins, Blu-ray. PG violence	19 October 6:15 pm	ÉL 84 mins, Blu-ray. Rating tbc
02 June 6:15 pm	Tuesday THE BLUE ANGEL* 104 mins, DCP, B&W. PG low level violence	27 October 6:15 pm	Tuesday PHANTOM OF THE PARADISE 91 mins, Blu-ray M violence
08 June 6:00 pm	Early start – long run time QUEEN MARGOT 161 mins, Blu-ray R16 violence & sex scenes	02 November 6:15 pm	DON'T LOOK NOW 110 mins, Blu-ray M violence & sex scenes
15 June 6:15 pm	DIRTY HARRY 102 mins, Blu-ray. R16	09 November 6:15 pm	MONA LISA AND THE BLOOD MOON 106 mins, Blu-ray. R16 violence, offensive language, sexual material & content that may disturb
22 June 6:15 pm	HOTERE Ω 82 mins, Blu-ray. M adult themes	16 November 6:15 pm	3 FACES 100 mins, Blu-ray. M suicide references
29 June 6:15 pm	MISSISSIPPI MASALA 117 mins, Blu-ray. PG coarse language	23 November 6:00 pm	Wayne Weston Memorial Screening Early start – long run time THE APARTMENT Ω 125 mins, Blu-ray, B&W. PG
06 July 6:15 pm	FALLEN ANGELS 99 mins, Blu-ray M violence, offensive language & sex scenes		
13 July 6:15 pm	THE BLACK TULIP 115 mins, DCP. Rating tbc		