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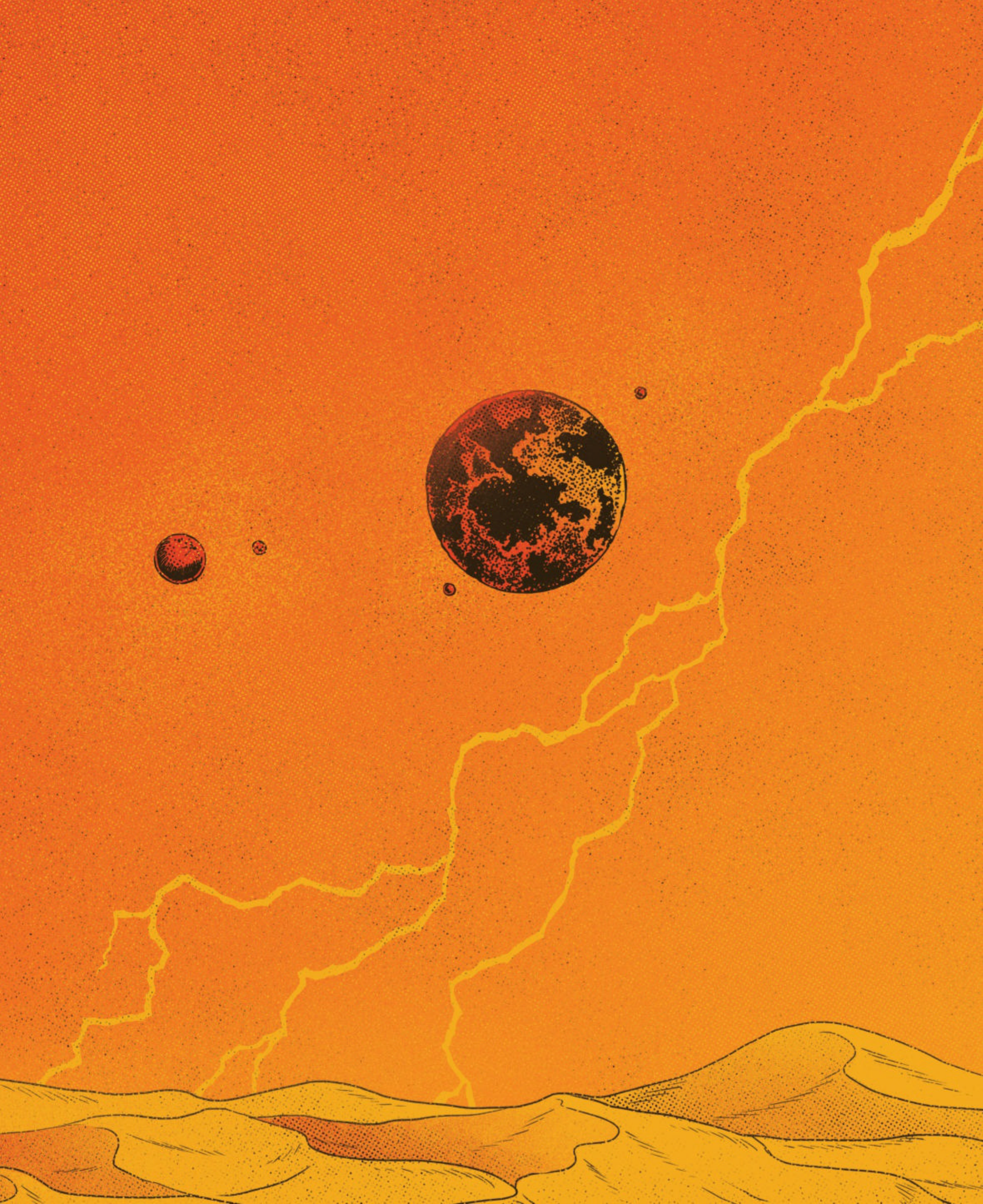

THE

VOID

ISSUE

FEATURE CONTENTS

ENTER THE DUNEVERSE

An introduction to the world of Frank Herbert's 'Dune'

Words by **TOM HUDDLESTON**

Fusing high science fiction, real-world geopolitics, environmental science, zen mysticism and messianic dogma, the universe created by author Frank Herbert in his 1965 novel 'Dune' and its sequels can seem dauntingly complex. That's because it is. Set millenia in the future at a time of entrenched Imperial power and feuding Great Houses, the books span multiple centuries and thousands of light years of settled space – though the main action takes place on the desert world of Arrakis, source of the fabled spice melange, and known to its inhabitants as Dune.

"Beginnings are such delicate times..."

Like a number of his SF contemporaries, Frank Herbert was a mystic visionary in the guise of a square-suited '60s everyman (*fig. 1*). A journalist, critic and lecturer with a penchant for ecology, Buddhism, pulp fiction and psychology, Herbert was also an early adopter of natural psychedelics, all of which would feed directly into his writing. Inspired by an article he was dispatched to write on the encroachment of desert sand into civilised areas of the US, Herbert spent five years researching and writing what would initially be serialised in *Analogue* magazine as two separate stories – 'Dune World' (1963) and 'The Prophet of Dune' (1965). Published in a single volume in 1965, 'Dune' would win the Hugo and Nebula sci-fi awards for that year and go on to become the best-selling science fiction novel of the century.

"He who controls the spice controls the universe."

The fulcrum of Herbert's universe is melange, the psychotropic spice that allows its users to see into the past and the future, and to use this ability to calculate the infinite probabilities required for navigation through space. Brewed deep in the sands of Arrakis, the spice is the most precious commodity in existence: an unsubtle cypher for our own dependence on foreign oil, and just as liable to provoke conflict. Indeed, Arrakis itself – with its souks, ergs and tendency towards Jihad – is a rather blunt reimagining of the modern Middle East, endlessly tussled over by the galactic elites.

Among whose number we are introduced to three Great Houses: the aristocratic House Corrino, seat of the Padishah Emperor Shaddam IV; the monstrous House Harkonnen, ruled by the vile, Caligulan hedonist Baron Vladimir Harkonnen; and House Atreides, honourable old-world feudalists under the guiding hand of the noble Duke Leto. It is the Duke's son and heir, Paul

Atreides – later known as Muad'dib – around whom the story revolves: a teenage idealist whose betrayal at the hands of the Harkonnens and subsequent rise as the prophetic leader of Arrakis's indigenous Fremen forms the backbone of the first book.

"Survival is the ability to swim in strange water."

Paul's revolutionary quest is helped and hindered by an array of background movers with shifting allegiances: all-female religious order the Bene Gesserit, who have been manipulating bloodlines for centuries in an attempt to breed their own Messiah; the post-human Mentats, whose cognitive abilities are artificially enhanced to machine-like levels; and the guileful Spacing Guild, who hold a monopoly on interstellar travel.

"Greatness is a transitory experience. It is never consistent."

For all its pulp trappings 'Dune' is a curious kind of sci-fi blockbuster novel, its relatively approachable first half giving way to a drug-fuelled desert war finale pitched somewhere between Carlos Castaneda and TE Lawrence. But the first book is a breeze next to Herbert's sequels: 'Dune Messiah' is an intricate, fatalistic courtly drama of betrayal and downfall, while the wildly convoluted 'Children of Dune' reintroduces old enemies without quite recapturing the dark magic of its predecessor. By the fourth instalment, 'God Emperor of Dune', Paul's son Leto has transformed himself into a giant, all-seeing half-sandworm dictator – so don't expect to be catching it at a theatre near you any time soon. In the wake of his father's death, Frank's son Brian Herbert would expand the Duneiverse with an array of preaching-to-the-faithful prequels, sequels and franchise expansions, partly based on Pop's unfinished notes.

While a film adaptation was always inevitable, the journey of 'Dune' to the big screen has been almost as storied as Paul's ascendance to the Godhead. Infamously, the first attempt was mounted in 1975 by tarot-obsessed Chilean polymath Alejandro Jodorowsky, who planned a 10-hour extravaganza starring Salvador Dalí as the Emperor, Orson Welles as the Baron and his own son Brontis as Muad'dib (*fig. 3*). The film was never made, but the designs and storyboards by French comics legend Moebius and German fleshpot HR Giger would go on to inspire the look of Ridley Scott's *Alien*, who himself would embark on an abortive attempt to film 'Dune'.

fig. 1

fig. 2

fig. 3

fig. 4

In the meantime the influence of 'Dune' continued to spread: with its moisture farms, dune seas and mystical Force, the first third of *Star Wars* feels remarkably like a perky, less self-involved junior cousin to Herbert's book (and what is Jabba the Hutt if not Baron Harkonnen in a giant slug suit?). Between the years 1978 and 1979, no less than three European electro-pioneers – Richard Pinhas, Klaus Schulze and Zed – all released noodly synth-prog LPs directly inspired by 'Dune' (presumably without consulting one another), though Iron Maiden's efforts to name a track after the book were crushed when Herbert denied permission, claiming: 'Frank Herbert doesn't like rock bands, particularly heavy rock bands, and especially bands like Iron Maiden'. What he'd have made of pop pixie and future-astronaut's wife Grimes's 2010 debut album, 'Geidi Primes', named for the Harkonnen home planet and packed to the gills with deep-cut 'Dune' references, is anyone's guess.

"Ye Gods, what a monster!"

By the 1980s, the film rights to 'Dune' had passed to Italian production maestro Dino De Laurentiis, whose mammoth filmography spans everything from Federico Fellini's *La Strada* to Stephen King's petrol-drunk directorial effort *Maximum Overdrive*. High, perhaps, on the profits from their 1982 smash *Conan the Barbarian*, De Laurentiis and his daughter and producing partner Rafaella made one of the boldest and – and as it turned out – least commercially sane decisions in all of cinema history, installing David Lynch not just as director but as screenwriter. Fresh from the Oscar-nominated success of *The Elephant Man* (and from turning down the chance to direct *Return of the Jedi*), Lynch was handed $40 million and a cast of global acting stalwarts and packed off to Juarez, Mexico, to realise Frank Herbert's sprawling vision.

What emerged was something entirely singular: a grotesque, semi-incomprehensible art-sci-fi folly, at times hilariously blunt, at others genuinely transcendent. Retaining HR Giger's services, Lynch managed to make the Harkonnens into perhaps the most revolting villains ever brought to the screen; a race of carrot-topped sadists in fetish wear who kill for pleasure, tear the flesh from live cows and have the face of Sting. While many of the visual effects have dated horribly, others – including the fleshy, wheezing, grown-up-*Eraserhead*-baby Guild Navigator in the film's opening scene (*fig. 4*) – still look extraordinary. But the film was a shadow of Lynch's intended three-hour vision, hacked down by De Laurentiis and his backers Universal, who bizarrely seemed to believe they were about to produce the next *Star Wars*. The studio even went so far as to release a range of tie-in activity books, games (*fig. 2*) and action figures (relish the face of the lucky eight-year-old who found Baron Harkonnen under his Christmas tree that year).

The film was a failure, but Universal weren't done with Lynch. In 1988 a three-hour *Dune* was cobbled together for US television from off-cuts and peculiar, interspersed explanatory voiceovers – far from Lynch's intended vision, it drove the director to remove his name from the credits, replacing it with Alan Smithee and refusing to mention *Dune* in interviews ever since. In recent decades, however, this Frankenstein cut has served as the basis for a number of creative, painstaking fan edits: if you can find it online (and for legal reasons we absolutely urge you not to) the so-called SpiceDiver Edit might be the best extant version of Lynch's film.

"Highly organised research is guaranteed to produce nothing new."

But while the Alan Smithee cut has its pleasures – not least the sight of Patrick Stewart bellowing, "Behold, as a wild ass in the desert, go I forth to my work!" – the same can't really be said for *Dune*'s next adaptation, a three-part, 265-minute miniseries screened by the Sci-Fi Channel in 2000. A popular hit on release, the slavishly faithful miniseries is flatly designed and directed, notable largely for the enthusiastic performance of *Doc Martin*'s Ian McNeice as the Baron. A 2003 sequel, *Children of Dune*, features a game turn from the young James McAvoy as Paul's son Leto, but the sub-*Babylon 5* sets and scripting render it missable.

"The sleeper must awaken!"

Is 'Dune' unfilmable? Is the book simply too complex, too overstuffed, too downright cosmic to work within the confines of the cinema screen? We are about to find out. Working with a serious studio budget and an impeccable cast and the benefit of 21st century SFX, Denis Villeneuve may have the best chance yet to fully realise Frank Herbert's vision. If Villeneuve can make the world-building feel organic and not like a lecture on galactic politics; if he can lean into the *Game of Thrones*-alike palatial intrigue and backstabbing; if he can give the characters real spark and even a touch of humour, then we might finally end up with a 'Dune' movie worthy of its quixotic creator

Dune *is released in UK cinemas on 21 October*


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THE SANDMAN

A Quebecois kid at the horizons of space and time: Denis Villeneuve on *Dune*.

Words and interview by **ANTON BITEL** Illustration by **ALEX FINE**

Denis Villeneuve loves a challenge. The Quebecois filmmaker turned a horrific real-life misogynistic massacre – the sort of material that would normally yield only the lowest form of exploitation – into 2009's sensitive *Polytechnique* (shot twice, in French- and English-language versions). He adapted José Saramago's unfilmable novel 'The Double' into 2013's sublimely singular *Enemy*. He took on a sequel to Ridley Scott's much loved *Blade Runner* and crafted from it an soulful epic of humanity's evolution. *Blade Runner 2049*, from 2017, and 2016's excellent *Arrival*, marked Villeneuve's own evolution towards science fiction, and now he is characteristically essaying another impossible work: Frank Herbert's expansive 1965 novel 'Dune'. Shot in IMAX, the first part of this sprawling space saga, with its internecine, interplanetary dynastic struggles, its desert uprisings and gigantic worms, is now complete. Villeneuve talks us through the collision of this arid alien world and his own wildly fertile imagination.

LWLies: From your feature debut *August 32nd on Earth* to *Incendies*, *Sicario*, *Blade Runner 2049* and now *Dune*, you have often been a director of deserts. What keeps drawing a filmmaker from cold-climate Canada to the dry sandy wastelands?

Villeneuve: I was raised by the St Lawrence River, and I was someone who spent a very meditative childhood looking at the horizon. There are similarities, in wintertime, with the horizon. It's like something that has an impact on the soul. I think that my deep attraction to the desert is that the emptiness – the infinity – of the desert is like a kind of mirror. It's like an inner journey – being in contact with infinity. It's bringing you back to your own humility, your own place in the world, your own singularity. Its silence is my best friend, my companion. Silence is like a comfort for me. It's a mirror of your own inner soul. The magnitude is like a magnifying glass. I've been driven to bring characters into that space so that they are naked spiritually, and psychologically, and you can explore, like under a microscope, and magnify their inner journey. It's like a quest for purity.

Your brother Martin's film *Mars et Avril* is also science fiction. Was there a lot of SF in the Villeneuve household when you were growing up?

I have been attracted to science fiction since a very early age. My father was obsessed by technology, and all those scientific magazines about new discoveries, like *Popular Mechanic* or *Science et Vie*. So there was that presence of how the world could evolve with technology – of what the world of tomorrow could be. And I must not underestimate the presence of a nuclear power plant that I could see from my kitchen. I was raised in the atomic age where the big fear of the time was not the climate, but the atomic bomb. And to know that you had that power just a few kilometres from home – I think it's something that sparked a lot of imagination. You eat your cereal in the morning and you look at the nuclear power plant.

At what point did you first encounter Frank Herbert's novel? And did you immediately think, "One day I will make a film of this"?

I read 'Dune' when I was very young, specifically at the moment when I was starting to dream big about cinema, following filmmakers, starting to be very interested by what a director was doing, being drawn to the filmmaking process. And I remember starting to do storyboards and early drawings of 'Dune' with my best friend at the time who wanted to be a director as well. We were obsessed with this world. I'm not saying that I was dreaming to make a movie about it right away, but definitely I was deeply inspired by it. For me it was one of my big dreams. If you had said to me, 'Ultimately what would you like to do as a filmmaker?', I would have said, 'Dune.' When I landed in Hollywood, and people were asking me, 'What would be your dream?', it's always those four letters that were coming out of my mouth. It's a book that stayed with me through the years for several reasons, and still today every time I open it, I get the same kind of deep joy reading it.

'Dune' is a mind-bendingly complex novel which famously foiled Alejandro Jodorowksy's attempts to make it, and led to David Lynch's most compromised production. Were you anxious about the novel's perceived brand as a *film maudit*?

I always related the birth of my relationship with 'Dune' with the love for a book – with the sensations, the images, the inspiration coming out of the pages. So I would have done *Dune* even if it had not been attempted by anybody at all. I think it would have been complicated if I had discovered 'Dune' through David Lynch's eyes, or through Jodorowsky's eyes. Then it would have been more difficult, maybe. But I have my own very pure, intimate relationship with the book. My roots were deep into the book, so I didn't mind about the wind.

In a weird way, even your *Dune* is a *film maudit*, in the sense that it was originally scheduled to come out in late 2020, but then was delayed by Covid. As the director, did you regard this as a frustration, or an opportunity to do more post-production tweaking?

I will not say that we changed the movie, but I had more time to make sure that everything was perfect, that it reached the quality that I was looking for. I would have done it before the pandemic, but it was like a race, and then, instead of running, it became more like a grounded walk. Also I feel that it brought things to the movie – it forced us all to do things a little bit differently – and more specifically the music. I think Hans Zimmer was kind of destabilised by the pandemic and, in a good way, I'm sure the score is different to it would have been had he been more in his usual environment. I'm talking about Hans because he was obsessed with 'Dune' for decades. It was one of his big dreams to do a 'Dune' score. When the pandemic landed and time was stretched, it gave him more time to experiment, definitely. I'm all good with the movie right now.

What kinds of liberties have you taken, through adaptation, with the original text? Is this a close adaptation?

Yes, it's a close adaptation. The first liberty that I took is to make the movie in two parts. The story is so rich, so dense; 'Dune' is all about details. It's so sophisticated and there are so many rich cultures that are described. There is substance to make tonnes of movies. There's so many things that I needed to approach, to describe, to shoot and to bring to the

screen, that I thought it would definitely need a minimum of two movies. And I think that, by doing so, there are things that I did explain in the first movie, [but] there are also things that I didn't tackle, that I didn't describe, I just skimmed the surface of some ideas that will be approached deeper in the second movie. I need to find the equilibrium between both movies. So the first one is just like opening the door on a world.

Could you have managed to make something on the scale of *Dune* without having first made *Arrival* and *Blade Runner 2049*?

No. All my filmography has been built like bricks. I'm thinking projects that are more and more technically complex, and bigger challenges. I would never have been able to do *Dune* without doing *Arrival* or *Blade Runner*. I would not dare to say that they were rehearsals, but definitely I was able to do *Dune* because I did *Blade Runner*. I learnt so much doing it about world building, and about VFX. It's accumulative.

The protagonist of *Dune*, Paul Atreides, will eventually lead desert-dwelling religious fanatics in a jihadist crusade that inevitably evokes the iconography of al Qaeda or Daesh. Is it your intention to subvert the conventional Hollywood notion of the hero, and to reject seeing ideological struggle in black-and-white, us-vs-them terms?

Very early in my filmmaking life I've been in contact, in a very beautiful and powerful way, with the complexity of the world. I started my career by making documentaries alone around the world, in most of Asia, the Middle East, Europe, Northern Africa. I travelled to the States, I travelled to most parts of the world. At a very young age I was in contact with tonnes of different views of the world where everybody thinks they have the right answer. And it cultivated so much doubt and humility inside me, seeing how grey the world is. It's all about points of view and perspective – on which side of the fence you are standing. As a filmmaker I have a responsibility to try my best to bring that complexity, and to build bridges. I don't like black-and-white. I don't like the way the world is brought to the public by politicians right now. Polarisation is dangerous. I like complexity and dialogue, yeah.

With its evocations of Greek myth and of *Lawrence of Arabia*, and its protagonist who can see into the future, *Dune* seems as interested as, say, your previous films *Enemy* and *Arrival* were in the collapsing of time and the circular repetitions of history. Is this how you see your role as an artist: to present, in the myths you realise on screen, echoes of past, present and future, and to reflect who we are and how little we change over endless transfers of power?

I'm deeply obsessed by the idea that we can change, that we can evolve as human beings, the idea that we are struggling with the

burden of genetics, education, family, the past, politics, religion – all the influences as a human being. Really, I think that these movies have that in common: this quest to free the soul from that heritage and this relationship with the past. That's what brings me hope for humanity as well: I think we can evolve. But if we are not aware of it, we are condemned. Hell is repetition.

How much do you see your *Dune* as looking back millennia to our own imminent future of harsh climatic conditions and depleted resources? Is this an environmentalist call to arms?

When Frank Herbert wrote the novel in the '60s, he was inspired by the new current of ecology where people were trying to use nature to control nature. He was into the idea that the salvation of humanity could be by a dance with nature instead of the domination of nature, and there was already a seed of that in the novel that is very important. It was written 60 years ago, but he was already foreseeing the forces that were about to clash together between extreme exploitation of natural resources and climate change.

You know, Roger Deakins and I sometimes talk together and say, 'My god, it's like we are getting closer to [*Blade Runner*] 20fucking49.' It's crazy! I always saw one of the ideas behind making this movie was to bring eyes back to the novel, and as a call to arms to the younger generation to react and to move forward to try and build a world where we are not into domination, but more into symbiosis with nature.

You shot *Dune* in IMAX, but there must have been conversations during the 2020 lockdown about releasing it direct to streaming. As you make a film, do you have to think about all these different formats of reception, or is your eye always on the biggest form, in this case the IMAX version? Do you lament what a grand interplanetary epic loses to the small screen?

Dune is very epic, but at the same time it's an introspective movie. I mean, we are very close to a young man who is defining his identity, finding his space in the world and being in contact with a new environment, and the impact of the landscape and environment on his soul. Really early on, I remember talking with Greig Fraser, the cinematographer, and the first thing we talked about was IMAX, that this movie will need [IMAX]. That was my aim. It was to embrace the desert. Also, it was interesting to approach the desert in a more vertical way. We have seen the desert – very often, in my own films – as a landscape. I wanted to approach that landscape with a different scope, and be more epic and more immersive. So we designed the movie for IMAX right away, and it was the first time that I was shooting a movie on purpose knowing that some elements will be in IMAX and others will be in 2.35 in the movie, which was not something that we could decide in post-production.

It's a new language, it's a new way to create impact, to destabilise the audience, to create emotion on the screen. I deeply love it. I think IMAX is the future of cinema. I want to go full IMAX on the next movies that I do. I think it's a very powerful format. And I think watching *Dune* on a TV screen or at home is, to use an analogy, like driving your speedboat in a bathtub, or trying to use a motorbike on your driveway. I mean, there's no... you will never have have the real *Dune* experience if you watch it on the small screen. It's a movie that has been designed, dreamed, thought, built and done for a full IMAX and widescreen experience, so I will not recommend watching this movie on a small screen. It's like a waste of time for me.

"Watching *Dune* on a TV screen or at home is, to use an analogy, like driving your speedboat in a bathtub."

Has there been discussion around continuing the story with Herbert's subsequent novels? Or are you moving on to something completely different and putting this world behind you once you've completed your adaptations of the first novel?

Right now I've done half of a movie, and I have to finish for my mental sanity, and I think also for the audience we have to finish it. There will be a *Dune: Part 2*, and I can foresee making a *Dune 3*, which would be 'Dune Messiah' from 1969. That has a very powerful ground to make a very important movie. That's like three movies. And those movies will take a very long time to make. But that was the initial movement, the initial dream: to make a kind of trilogy. After that, we'll see where we go

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FAREWELL MY CONCUBINE

Rebecca Ferguson on tearing up the clichés of femininity and motherhood in Denis Villeneuve's *Dune*.

Words and interview by **LEILA LATIF** Illustration by **ALEX FINE**

Ever since Rebecca Ferguson first received international attention for the British historical serial *The White Queen* in 2013, she has carved out a reputation for bringing elegance, fierce intelligence and complexity to her roles. She is equally compelling playing a predator in the 2019 Stephen King adaptation *Doctor Sleep*, or the prey of a killer space alien in 2017's *Life*, and she is also partly responsible for the huge uptick in quality of the recent *Mission: Impossible* films. This year she is being transported thousands of years into the future for Denis Villeneuve's *Dune*, playing the conflicted concubine Lady Jessica. She explains what she brought to the role and how this adaptation reimagined what a mother, a mistress and a protector could be.

LWLies: It's been a long two years since you shot *Dune* – how was it seeing the final film?

Ferguson: I was so taken aback. It was like being hit by something very hard. I cried. I was ridiculously emotional when I saw it because I felt really proud to be a part of it. And I felt

like there wasn't one person who stood out. I felt it was such a collaboration. I could see Paul (Arion)'s visual effects through it. I could see Greig (Fraser), the DoP. I could see every single human. I could just sense them all.

Do you think it succeeds beyond other adaptations because now the technology exists to really create this world, or is it specific to Denis Villeneuve's vision?

Oh, a hundred per cent it's down to Denis' vision, but it's also kind of connected with the other option. He lives in a world where his environment suits the development of what he has done. We're not living in the 1960s any more, where women weren't always portrayed in an equal way. I believe he's created a masterpiece. Other people would have done something different. Whether it would be better or worse... I mean, can you imagine Wes Anderson's *Dune*? That'd be so lyrical and colourful.

The source material was written in 1965 and science fiction tends to reflect the anxieties of the time. Do you think they are present in this version?

I think people who know the story will be very excited about where we've taken it. And I think people who don't know will feel comfortable with how it's been portrayed. It will start discussions on geopolitics and recycling and resources – it's so graspable in so many different areas, which I love. It can start a conversation in so many different ways.

The obvious parallel with the spice is oil in the Middle East.

And even before that, with actual spices and saffron and anything that's exclusive. And how about what trees in Arrakis mean? They say it takes, I don't know how many litres of water to plant the trees, enough for hundreds of lives.

"So you want me to play a mum and a queen and a fucking protector? Are you kidding me?"

But the trees also signify hope for the people. That symbol of political empowerment, right? Holy moly.

How do you view the role of gender in this version of the story?

I feel there's a fine line between recreating, highlighting, reshaping and also paying homage to someone's writing. So, you have to be very careful. You have to be respectful but I'm not sure I would have enjoyed it as much if Jessica was portrayed as much of a concubine that she is in the book. It wouldn't have interested me as much.

We know you as an actress across so many different genres and as an action star. Did you relate to Lady Jessica having so many sets of skills herself?

No, but I think there are reasons why we get cast. I think there are reasons why people give you certain roles, you know? I criticised it straight away when Denis told me about it. I remember sitting in the meeting with him saying, so you want me to play a mum and a queen and a fucking protector? Are you kidding me? I mean, that's what she is. And then we had other incredibly fun conversations and they called me and said, 'He's offered you the role.' And I thought, has he? Was he even there?! Then I realised that he wasn't interested in those extremities. Denis is talking about the subtlety in between. This is about the character of a mother and a son, their path and their arcs and how they change when it comes to empowerment. It's the moment when she decides to go from a listening concubine to an active warrior. That subtle change is what he's after. He knows I can do the other bits.

The Bene Gesserit have this incredible religiosity, but not to a specific god. How did you, and this adaptation, comprehend their spirituality?

I relate to that much more as a person. I understand it in the sense of it being like a chain – everything is linked together and the choices you make have a ripple effect. That I believe in. The Bene Gesserit are forced to make choices that are not their own, but for the greater good. And that's what I love about the rebelliousness of Jessica. She broke it for her love. She broke it because she knew that her man wanted a son. And yet she was willing to possibly sacrifice her son's life.

You think she is motivated by love not ambition?

Gaius Helen Mohiam [played by Charlotte Rampling] accuses her of ambition, and she's right. How dare Jessica think that she is the one that will be a Kwisatz Haderach. How dare you think that you are the one to put the universe on such a spectrum of fear and chaos. How dare you. But her reasons are grander than a single thought, and partly she does it out of love. So, is that then stronger? It's just a very interesting and complex conversation to have, which I love.

Frank Herbert wrote sci-fi, but it's quite science light. There's this spiritual side and his characters seem less reliant on technology than we currently are in many ways.

Well, I don't know if people see the genre as sci-fi. It's outside of space and it's futuristic and it has different elements. But I completely agree with you, it's not even otherworldly. It's very present, it's very accurate to today, although seen in a larger scope. And recycling your body fluids in a space suit – you can grasp it and it's disgusting. Using recycled fluid to make the coffee, it's disgusting, but it's brilliant.

This film covers the first half of the novel and we know the next half has a huge arc for Lady Jessica. Did you have that in mind when you were making it?

I didn't want to go there in my mind because she doesn't know she's going there. To be honest, I don't really know where it's going. I was thrown into it. I filmed, I did read bits of it but I found it difficult. It didn't sit in me. And I was so focused on working and learning and listening to Denis. I kept on going back to the book but I never finished it. So, I don't really know what happens. I know the grander scale of things, but not the smaller elements, the bits that I love. I was on a set the other day and a security guy came up to me and said, 'Oh my god, I just want to say that I can't wait for *Dune*. I am the biggest fan. I've read all of his books.' And I said, 'You've read all of his books. Does that mean, you know the second half of my book? Right, come in and have lunch with me and tell me everything.' I loved listening to a great fan retell the story.

So what's next for you that we can look forward to seeing?

I'm acting in and producing a new show for Apple called *Wool*, which I'm really excited about. It's also a futuristic thing but I think it brings us back to what we said. Yes, it's futuristic and elements of a film I did called *Reminiscence* are futuristic, but they're also very connected to the world. Miami is under water and that is what we believe is going to happen. We're telling a story that is going to happen because we've fucked the planet over. So, in *Wool* we've had to adapt to what we've done – we all have to live in silos under the ground. And we've been there for hundreds of years, but there's still the will to break through. It's an extraordinary concept and it's a really good show

LWLies Sixties

A decade of film art reimagined

The 1960s was a decade of unprecedented change – particularly in the world of film, with movements such as the French New Wave and New Hollywood marking a radical departure from the norm.

In celebration of this innovative era, we partnered with 99designs by Vistaprint and six leading illustrators to reimagine iconic films from the ’60s, creating a striking collection of posters that connect great design of the past with artistic trends of today.

LWLies Sixties is part of 99 Days Of Design, from 99designs by Vistaprint – discover more at ***99designs.com/99daysofdesign***

99designs by vistaprint

DAYS OF DESIGN

Daisies (1966)
by Bijou Karman
@bijoukarman

2001: A Space Odyssey (1968)
By Jim Stoten
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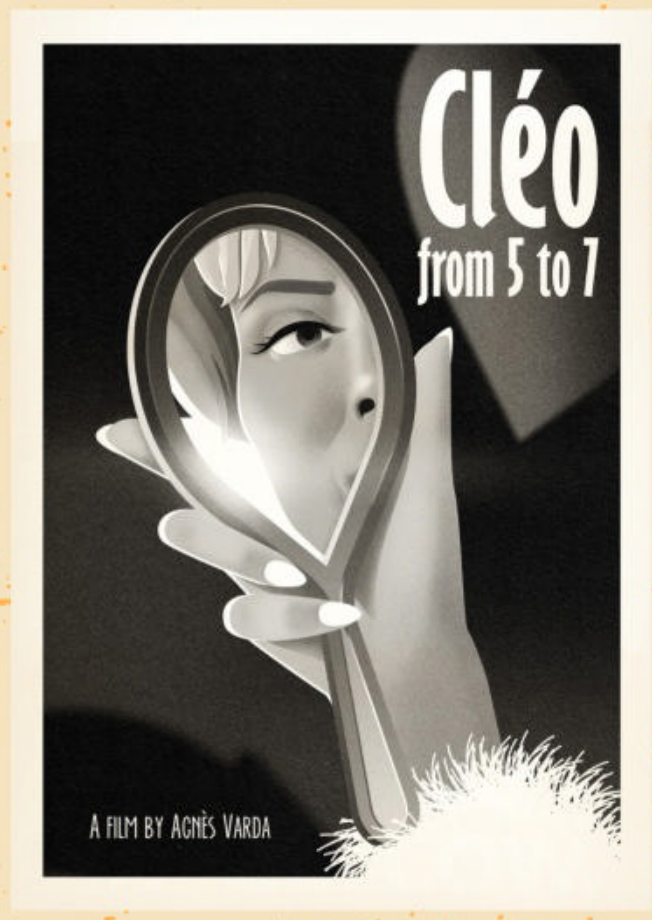

Cléo from 5 to 7 (1962)
By Evgeny Todorov
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Bonnie and Clyde (1967)
By Camila Flamenco
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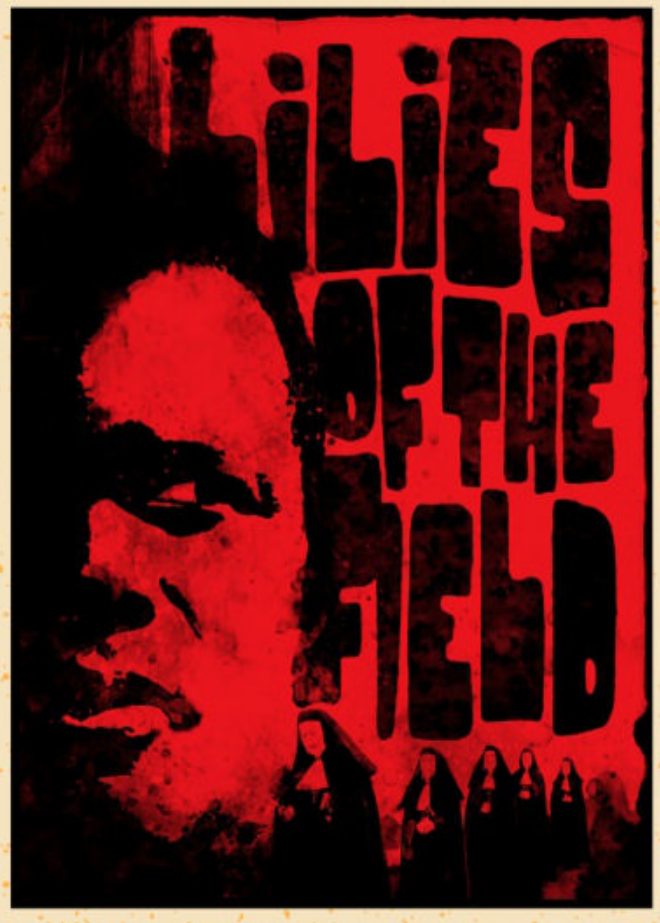

Lilies of the Field (1963)
By Phil Poole

Playtime (1967)
By Laurène Boglio
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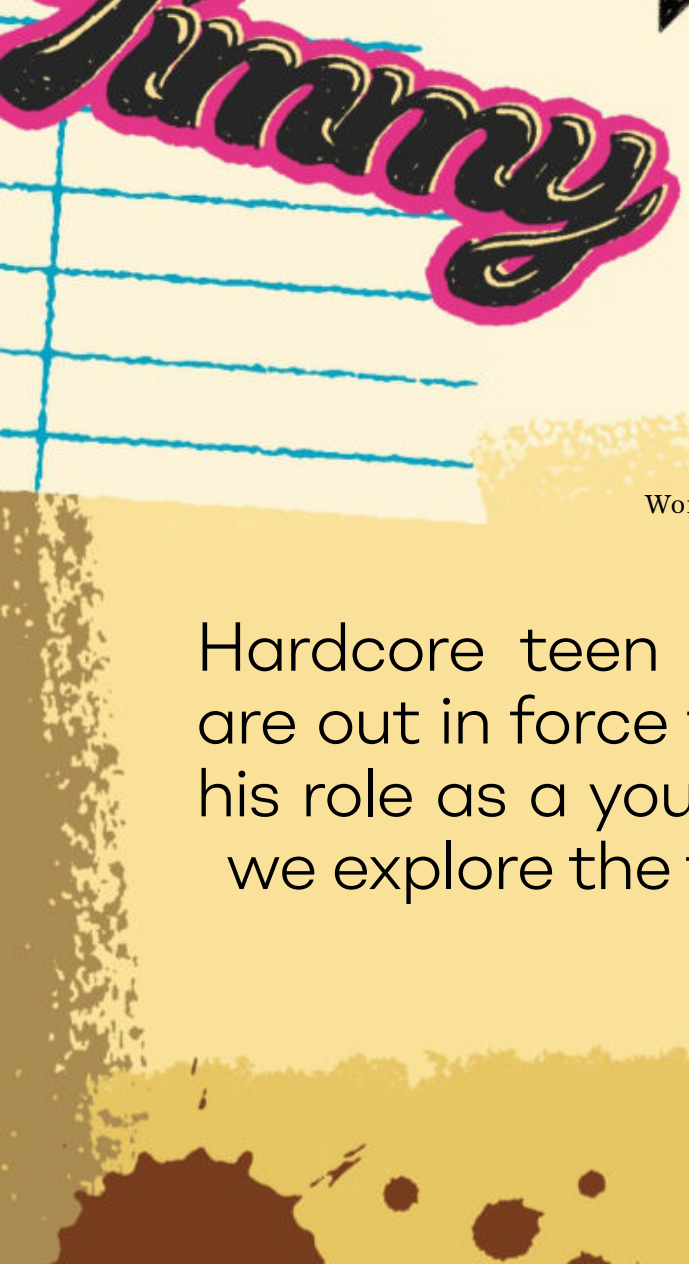
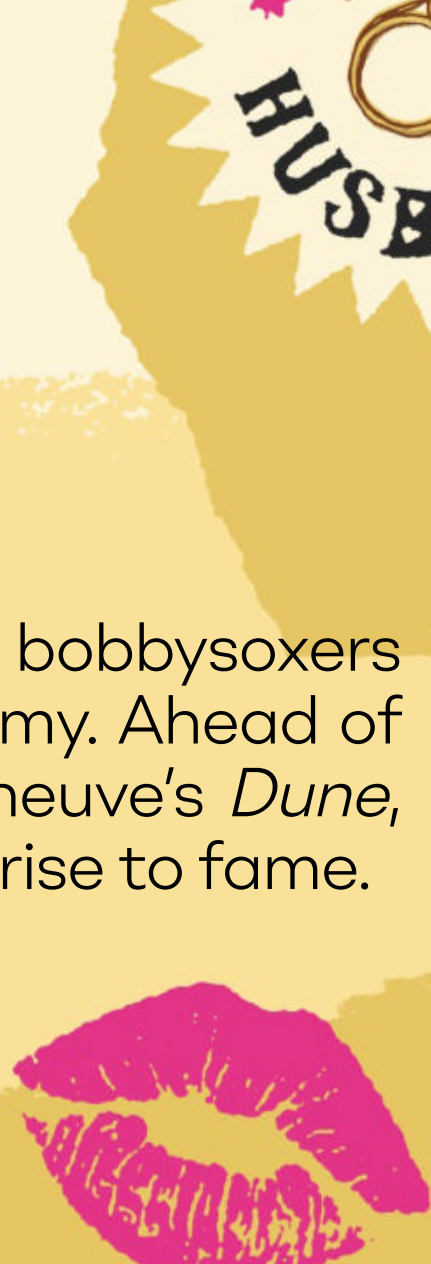
TIMOTHÉE CHALAMET IN FIVE ACTS

Words by **PHILIPPA SNOW** Illustration by **NICK TAYLOR**

Hardcore teen idoldom exists, and the bobbysoxers are out in force for a man they called Timmy. Ahead of his role as a young messiah in Denis Villeneuve's *Dune*, we explore the topography of his curious rise to fame.





1. CALL ME BY YOUR NAME

A sapling-slim, trilingual boy who looks 15 and a sadistic LA scion who looks roughly 32 are playing, respectively, a 17-year-old and a 24-year-old graduate embarking on a hot, formative love affair in Northern Italy in Luca Guadagnino's ultra-romantic *Call Me by Your Name*. Chalamet, who plays the teenage Elio, did appear in Christopher Nolan's *Interstellar* in 2014, but has failed auditions for *The Neon Demon*, *The Theory of Everything*, *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*, and *White Boy Rick* since then, making his proper introduction in Guadagnino's film feel like a contemporary version of Vivien Leigh achieving stardom in *Gone with the Wind*.

Critics praise Chalamet for what they perceive as an extremely naturalistic turn as a conflicted, impetuous adolescent, realistic enough to avoid being entirely sweet or sympathetic; audiences love his unusual beauty, his delicate Gothic Bambi looks harkening back to the earliest days of Johnny Depp's appearances in film and television. (Nobody, it is agreed, would confuse him with one of the many Chrises who roam Hollywood like bison, almost prehistoric in their brand of sex appeal.) Like Leonardo DiCaprio before him, his resemblance to a cute, tomboyish girl makes him unthreatening enough to be adored by teens and preteens, despite many of them being too young to see Guadagnino's film in cinemas. He earns an Oscar nomination, and an interview in *GQ* casts him as an industrious would-be icon, highly-strung and doggedly ambitious where some other nascent movie stars might be casual or cool. Greta Gerwig, interviewed for the *GQ* piece, likens him to a young Daniel Day-Lewis. Nobody can quite decide yet if this is preposterous or not.

2. BEAUTIFUL BOY

Obviously, everyone finds it amusing that Timothée Chalamet has been cast in a movie called *Beautiful Boy*. 'Timmy is the most beautiful boy! He should run us over with his car!' Gen Z kids exclaim on Twitter. (He is now, as is befitting a successor to "Leo" or "R-Patz," being referred to as "Timmy." The call for an act of vehicular manslaughter is new, yes, but the principles of fandom stay the same.) In the film, Steve Carell is the long-suffering father of an addict, carrying himself with the same heartbreaking, hangdog Carellian air viewers remember from the more tragicomic beats of The (American) Office. A soundtrack of Sigur Rós and David Bowie, coupled with a honeyed visual style that makes the whole affair look like a catalogue for Ralph Lauren, makes *Beautiful Boy* feel a little like a Lifetime film for dads.

When Chalamet's sad, literary fuccboi Nic gets into meth, he is shown looking at a large-print website about how to use a needle in the library at college; in his diary, Nic has scrawled "WHEN I DISCOVERED DRUGS MY WORLD WENT FROM BLACK AND WHITE TO TECHNICOLOUR", as if he is not a teenage boy at all, but a middle-aged narc who learned about drugs from a pamphlet. With his dark and limpid eyes and nacreous skin, Timothée Chalamet seems born to play an addict, and in Felix van Groeningen's film the innocent, beseeching quality of his face makes him as eminently forgivable as the real-life Nic must have been in light of how many extra chances he was given. Still, it might have been called *Beautiful White Boy* for greater accuracy – this rich family, with an artist mother and a journalist father who writes for *New York Magazine* and *Rolling Stone*, can afford to send their son to rehab as many times as it takes.

18+

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3. THE KING

In the first half-hour of David Michôd's slick, featureless reworking of William Shakespeare's 'Henriad', Chalamet plays Henry V as the 15th-century version of a sullen, drunken wastrel on a gap year, his carousing and his lank hair and his pretty, emo pout conspiring to suggest Kevin the Teenager as much as any Shakespearian monarch. Later, in a neat parallel of the traditional arc attempted by all movie heartthrobs interested in being taken seriously as adult actors, Prince Hal finds himself required to give up his sybaritic lifestyle in favour of a more genuine image. Here, Chalamet – who is maybe 22 in Michôd's film, but still looks 16 – feels like a man who does not quite fill out his armour, an impression made worse still by the arrival of an insane Robert Pattinson as the French Dauphin in the third act. Pattinson, who was once as much of a Tiger Beat boy-cutie as his co-star, now attains a genuine and thrilling level of derangement in his work, his approach to acting echoing what the academic and writer Maggie Nelson once said about artists needing to "brush up against" being bad in order to be great. "When I was a dancer," Nelson recalled in 2013, "we were always encouraged to fall in rehearsal, so that you could know what the tipping point of any given movement was. That way, when you did it on the stage, you could be sure you were taking it to the edge without falling on your face." In *The King*, Pattinson risks falling spectacularly on his face, his Pepé Le Pew voice and long, Sun-In-coloured hair so close to being the dumbest thing you've ever seen that they spring back against the fulcrum of bad taste and become genius, exhilarating to behold. Chalamet, at 22, is still too green to risk this kind of near-humiliation, so that he ends up being something worse than awful in *The King*: entirely forgettable.

4. LITTLE WOMEN

In 'Little Women', Theodore "Laurie" Laurence is the literal boy next door, a figure of fantasy for the March sisters until they grow up enough to realise that fantasy is no longer an option. Viewed in this light, Chalamet's casting as Laurie is perhaps the most obvious use of his particular charms since he played the Beautiful Boy in *Beautiful Boy*. He is perfect: coltish, prone to throwing himself down on chairs and *chaise longues* at unusual angles, sometimes cocky, sometimes petulant and overly dramatic – a dish not quite done being cooked. When he marries Amy, the young March played with a smoky voice and a precocious pragmatism by the brilliant Florence Pugh, the union only really feels like an adult one on her part, as though it were a gender-swapped take on a feudal marriage with a child bride from the 1100s. Laurie, like Timothée Chalamet, remains in some way preserved as a teen dream boy, an idea and not a man. "Don't sit there and tell me that marriage isn't an economic proposition," Amy snarls before accepting his proposal, frustrated that this arrested, wealthy playboy cannot understand the way the world works. Cleverly, Chalamet makes Laurie's flitting between sisters appear less caddish and solipsistic than it might otherwise have by selling, in the scene where he first meets the entire clan, the idea that he is not in love with any single member, but with the March family itself – his face, on seeing their homestead and their mutual warmth, is as thunderstruck by adoration as a hero's in a rom-com. "I have always known I should be part of the March family," Christian Bale's version of Laurie says in Gillian Armstrong's 1994 adaptation, making the implicit explicit. Gerwig, trusting Chalamet to tell us with his eyes what Bale is forced to say with words, ultimately ends up creating a sweeter and more empathetic playmate for the Marches.

Timmy

5. SUPERBOWL AD

Squaring the circle in regards to his inheritance of the title, formerly held by Johnny Depp, of the thinking alt-teen's Hollywood heartthrob, Chalamet stepped into the uncalled-for role of Edward Scissorhands' son for a Superbowl commercial advertising Cadillacs. The spot may have raised far more questions than it answered – was Kim Boggs already pregnant when her Scissorhanded lover fled their town? What might sexual intercourse be like between a human teenage girl, and a Frankensteinian humanoid with blades for hands? Would Scissorhands have been expected to pay child support? – but it did serve to underscore a certain level of self-awareness on the part of the young actor. It is difficult to say whether his puppyish vulnerability and wide, sensitive eyes are doing a better job of selling Cadillacs, or of selling Timothée Chalamet to an entire generation of Hot-Topic-loving, black-clad American girls. Moving with the same mime's grace as Depp in Tim Burton's original film, Chalamet is tasked with modernising many of the movie's beats, slicing fruit for breakfast smoothies and assembling chi-chi salads for a Chop'd style to-go chain. When Burton first conceived of Edward Scissorhands, he was looking for a way to build an allegory around his own alienation in the context of mainstream suburbia, making it odd to think that before Depp signed on to play the character, the role was offered to Tom Cruise. Of course, nobody working now is better suited to the part than Chalamet, just as nobody then was better suited than a fledgling Johnny Depp: both actors, as unusual-looking in the context of their peers as cuckoos dropped into the nests of dunnocks, carry with them a faint air of grunge rebellion even when they're shilling products for The Man

ARRAKIS RISING

Dune production designer Patrice Vermette on how he dragged the sci-fi spectacle back to the analogue era.

Words and interview by **DAVID JENKINS**

Patrice Vermette is one of Denis Villeneuve's longtime partners in crime, having hooked up with him during their formative years as budding filmmakers in Montreal. The pair have worked together on every film except *Blade Runner 2049*, and Vedette is now uniquely attuned to his creative cohort's unique aesthetic impulses. Coming together to make *Dune* is a dream project as both have grown up obsessed with the book and the massive potential it held for a screen adaptation.

LWLies: You are credited as production designer on *Dune*. Could you explain that role entails?

Patrice Vermette: My role on *Dune* was to provide visual environments to Denis' vision. I had to create the environment in which the story unfolds. And that can be the right set, the right battlefield, the right star ship, the right desert, the right mountain ridge, the right sand colour... I answer questions such as, 'How does a spaceship open its doors?', or, 'How do people drive this spaceship and what does the control panel look like?' It goes further than that: I'm thinking about the atmosphere and how thick the air is. It's all part of my duties. And to make sure that these environments – whether they're built or are on location – are created in a way that we're giving enough information to the post-production people for them to be able to do their jobs.

That sounds extremely extensive!

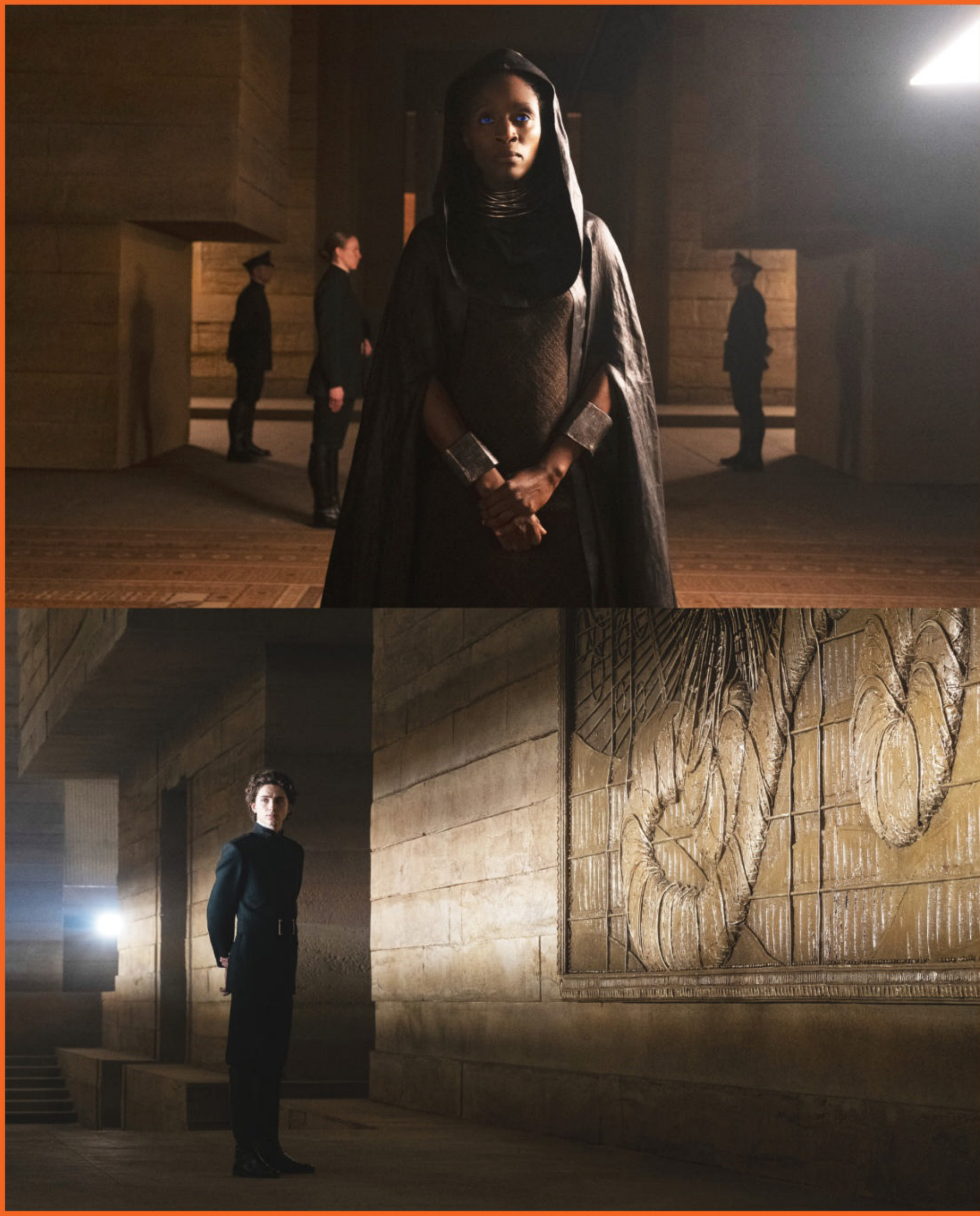
It is extensive. And that's of course all filtered through the director of the movie. He signs off on every design.

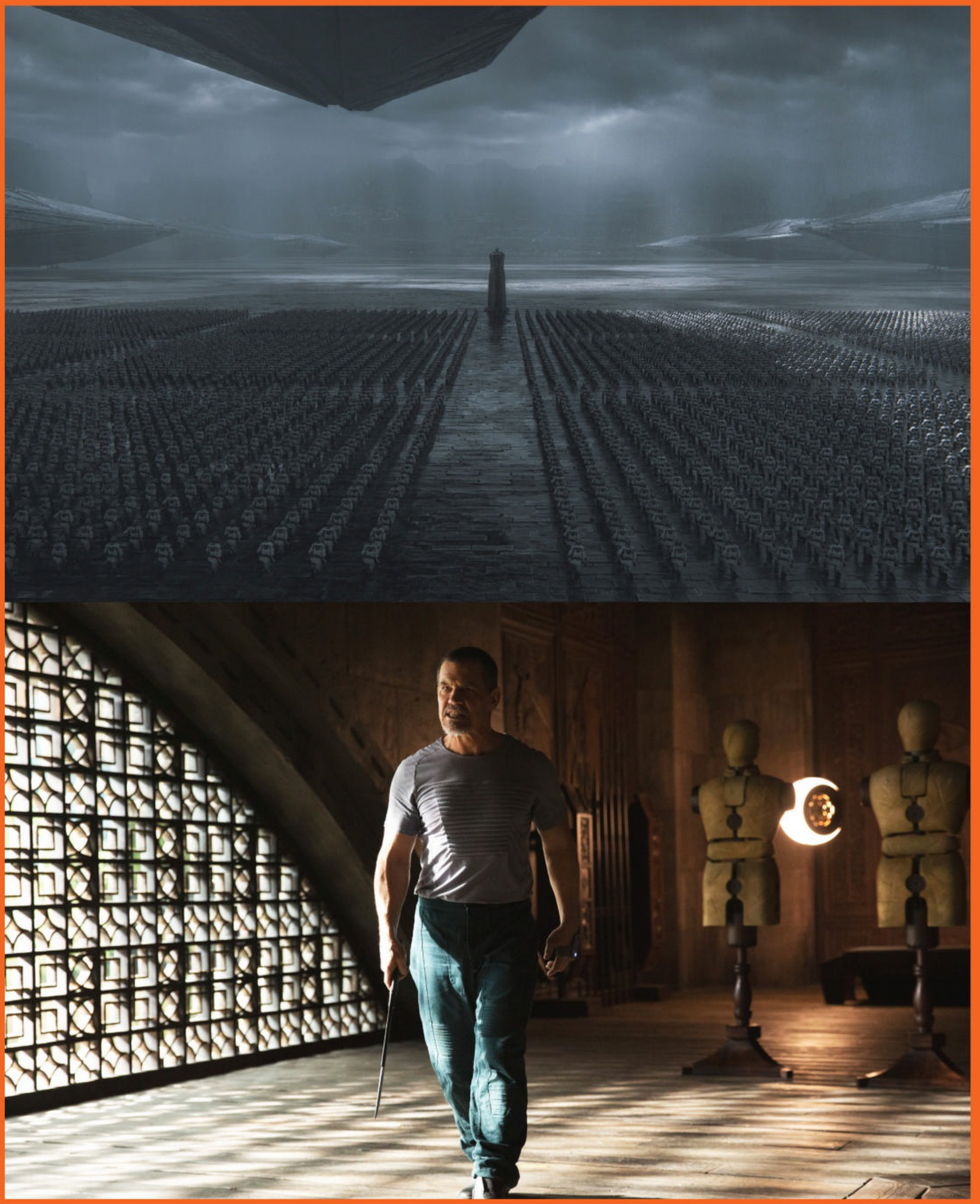
You've worked with Denis many times, and it feels as if you've developed a trademark style with him.

I like to think that's the case. Denis and I, we're both from Montreal – well, he's from Three Rivers – but we basically met in the mid-'90s. We're part of the same French-Canadian independent film community. He's one year older than I am, and we've read all the same science fiction novels. Our aesthetic tastes overlap quite a bit too. We love contemporary art, installation art, especially things involving light. We're both curious people. Over the years we've spent working together, there's definitely a shorthand between us, which has allowed him to focus on other things. That's why I love Denis because he trusts his collaborators. We know each other's strengths. The less is more approach is our thing. We want to make it believable. We anchor things in a solid reality. It helps the viewer believe in the more incredible aspects of the story.

One of the things that struck me about the novel is that there's very little description of place and what people and places look like. Arrakis is described fairly thoroughly, but beyond that, there's very little. Was it quite an open text for you in terms of production design?

Absolutely. The way Frank Herbert writes is very suggestive. It's suggests, but it is rarely specific. Even when he talks about sandworms, in one passage they're several kilometers long, and in another they're super small. It's super detailed on a character front, but there are also elements for inspiration. You feel totally free to come up with your own version of this world.





Is that daunting, to have such an open brief?

No, it's thrilling! It's fun! That's why I read 'Dune' when I was young and re-read it before getting into the project, but having a blank piece of paper in front of me is so much more exciting. We can create our own language. When we started the project, we looked at the other versions. There's been the aborted version by Alejandro Jodorowsky, the David Lynch version, there's been a TV series. And none of them look like one another. The book allows you to go where you want to go. There are, for instance, floating lamps in the book, but when you're making a film, the floating lamp can be whatever you want it to look like.

I'm a big fan of the Lynch version even though I think it's a poor adaptation of the book. The reason I like it is down to the production design. Yet this one could not be more different.

When Denis and I were doing *Arrival*, I revisited a bunch of old science fiction movies just to see what the heritage was. There were a couple of movies that were so exciting because they were so different. One of those was *Tron*, which I ended up doing some design on for a future project. And the other was *Dune*, which was and still is so different from anything that I've seen. And one more, which is more recent, is Jonathan Glazer's *Under the Skin*. It's always so nice to have a project where you can push your own limits and make something different, to go further. This book allows you to go there.

I love the idea of the analogue machinery in the film and the fact that there are no computers.

The reason we took out the computers from the film is because there's a war a couple of hundred years prior to the *Dune* story and all the computers are lost. Man has gone back to basics, technology-wise. It's going back to this idea of being respectful of the rules and lore of the *Dune* universe, but having a certain freedom when it comes to rendering details. To have screens in this film would be totally wrong.

Beyond the story and the novel, it seems that your work touches on all these other things such as ancient history and ethnography.

Every culture in *Dune* is 10,000-plus years in the future, but everything that is built needs to have a sense of history, and also a sense of the different planetary cultures. For Arrakis, it has its own indigenous people, the Fremen, and ever since the discovery of spice, they've been colonised by different people who have tried to control them. But there's this idea of colonial settlers attempting to impose their culture on the landscape, and that needs to be a part of the landscape. I hope we'll get to dig more into that in future films. Within the architecture of the royal residency in Arrakis, we tried to implement these cultural links by imagining that they were produced by the local Fremen who were working for the governor. There's a fresco with an interpretation of the worm, and a mural about the origin of the spice as a source of exploitation. When you go into a church you have the story of Christ, or when you go to the pyramids and tombs of Egypt, you have imagery that tells a story of the place.

***Star Wars* was a massive film for you personally when you saw it as a teen. Did it at all play into your work on *Dune*?**

I was seven years old and my dad took me to see *Star Wars* and looking at the credits at the end it suddenly struck me just how many people work in movies. It was kind of a eureka moment. *Star Wars* stole so many ideas from Frank Herbert's 'Dune', that it was always in the back of our minds when we were making this movie. Because we would be compared to *Star Wars*. We wanted to make something as exciting as *Star Wars* was for 1977, back when it first came out. In all modesty! And we needed to have fresh ideas in order to achieve that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DESERT MOVIES:

Deserts, and the movies that were filmed in them.

Research by **MARINA ASHIOTI** Illustration by **EMMA BALEBELA**

BROKEN HILL, NEW SOUTH WALES DESERT (AUSTRALIA)

Wake in Fright (1971)
The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert (1994)
Mission Impossible II (2000)
Strangerland (2015)
Mad Max (1979-2015)

SILVERTON, NEW SOUTH WALES DESERT (AUSTRALIA)

Wake in Fright (1971)
Razorback (1984)
Mad Max (1979-2015)

A TAXONOMY

SARAHA DESERT

Ice Cold in Alex (1958)
Fata Morgana (1971)
The Jewel of the Nile (1985)
The Sheltering Sky (1990)
The Way Back (2010)

AÏT BENHADDOU (MOROCCO)

Lawrence of Arabia (1962)
Oedipus Rex (1967)
The Jewel of the Nile (1985)
The Mummy (1999)
Gladiator (2000)

SAMALAYUCA DUNE FIELDS (MEXICO)

The Wild Bunch (1969)
El Topo (1970)
Dune (1984)
Conan the Destroyer (1984)

OUARZAZATE (MOROCCO)

The Sheltering Sky (1990)
The Way Back (2010)
A Hologram for the King (2016)

DEATH VALLEY NATIONAL PARK (US)

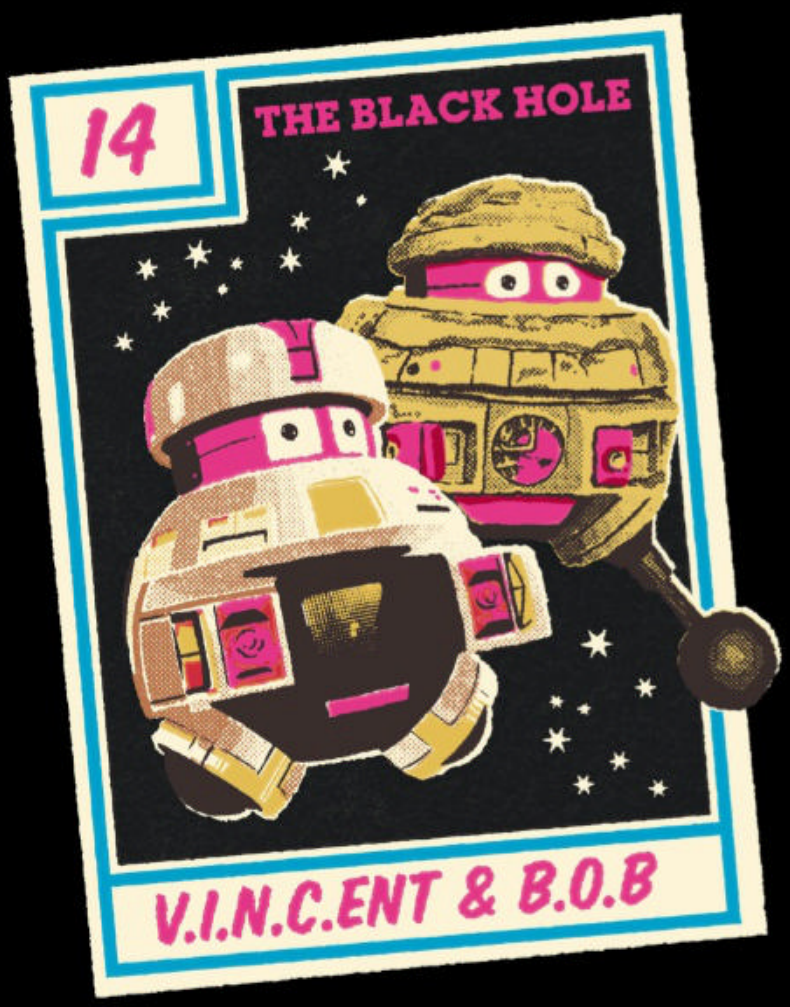
Three Godfathers (1948)
Zabriskie Point (1970)
Star Wars (1977–2019)

GO SEE A STAR WAR

The 1980s space race to capitalise on the success of George Lucas's *Star Wars* delivered a riches of embarrassment.

Words by **DAVID JENKINS** Illustration by **NICK TAYLOR**

In the midst of spewing low-grade pitches to the Director General of the BBC, blundering broadcaster Alan Partridge proposes an idea for a Norwich-based detective serial called *Swallow*. There is instant pushback. "Why do we need another detective serial?" the DG inquires, rhetorically. Partridge responds: "People like them, let's make some more of them." Knowing that Alan, at this moment, has nothing more than a title and a venue in mind, the bemused commissioner bats the idea away with embarrassing ease. It makes complete sense in the context of this desperate and lightly surreal scene. Yet in reality, Partridge's justification is sound.



If the history of modern cinema has taught us anything, it's that the "people like them, let's make some more" rationale holds a lot of grease when it comes to convincing the money people to flip open their coffers. Indeed, it embodies capitalism in a nutshell: watch how other people are making money and then do the same. Originality is a long-odds gamble. People want to nostalgically re-experience the same blissful in utero sensation over and over, and it's up to the pony-tailed power brokers in Hollywood – or any sector of the arts industry – to make that dream a reality.

Had Partridge been pitching in a 1980s elevator, and had his knock-off teatime laxative been an adventure-oriented sci-fi movie, then he would at the very least have been invited to produce a full treatment, if not given a green light on the spot and a horn of plenty for his troubles. For this was the post-*Star Wars* era, when anything that could be gussied up to sound like another roll of a franchise-friendly space messiah dice was given a second look. Yes, there are people who argue that you can't blame movies for the work they inspire. Frank Capra's sparkling 1934 film *It Happened One Night* is often considered to be a Rosetta Stone for modern romantic comedies. But should Capra's grave be cursed because the lineage of his classic-era opus winds its way to such reprehensible trash as *Failure to Launch* (2006)? Of course not. It's not Capra's fault that the idiots got a hold of his blueprint and didn't realise they were looking at it the wrong way up.

And so we can't blame *Star Wars* for the phalanx of tawdry knock-offs that arrived in its wake, a phalanx that, in terms of raw quality, traverses the spectrum from the mildly eccentric to the aggressively woeful. Let's start by looking at Garry Nelson's *The Black Hole* from 1979, as it was perhaps the first film to transport us to a slightly different but definitely recognisable galaxy far, far away. Only this one is dull in the extreme, despite an effects budget that could've powered a particularly opulent Scandinavian royal family for an entire decade. This was Disney's attempt at replicating the magic Lucasfilm formula, but instead of sending a hulking spacecraft to explore a series of beguiling new outworld landscapes, we get a once-thought-missing science vessel whose captain has gone a bit loopy while parked up next to a black hole.

Pairing the twin box office darlings of Anthony Quinn and Ernest Borgnine with two cutesy robots shaped like flying condiment shakers and sounding like Niles and Marty Crane was, it transpired, not enough to get 'em queuing around the block, even if some of the back projection and matte effects work is quite impressive. As is John Barry's extraordinary score, which comprises epic, rolling tides of overlapping strings which bare little-to-no connection to action on screen. It's the story and the staging that makes this one a particularly painful sit, with Maximilian Schell as the supposedly enigmatic Dr Hans Reinhardt, de facto captain of the stranded vessel who has surrounded himself with black, faceless killer drones, a massive red robot sidekick that resembles a JCB digger with various food processor attachments for arms, while also choosing to sport a shock of white-streaked supervillain-esque hair. Apparently, his status as a severe wrong'un is under question.

It's an easy film to poke fun at, existing as it does in an awkward liminal space between staid, studio bound hard sci-fi schlockers of the '50s and '60s, and the more expansive and audience-friendly epics of the'70s and beyond. Where *The Black Hole* feels every bit the boardroom-driven, demographically-aligned product picture, Luigi Cozzi's *Starcrash*, from 1978, poses the

question: how can someone copy *Star Wars* with about $14 in coins, a dressing up box of fire-damaged chiffon, a washed-up child evangelical preacher who rinsed thousands of people of their life savings and has since pivoted to acting, and loads of disused Christmas tree lights? The answer is they can't, but they can have great fun trying. Powered by Roger Corman's New World Pictures, the film sees Marjoe Gortner as our blow-dried hero Akton, a PVC-clad swashbuckler who is joined by Caroline Munro as intergalactic fetishwear mannequin Stella Star. We accompany the pair as they escape the clutches of the evil Count Zarth Arn (Joe Spinell) and proceed to pick up a retinue of helpers from all corners in order to mount a retaliation. Or something.

The strange thing about *Starcrash* is that David Hasselhof, who turns up in the film's second half as buff helpmeet Prince Simon, delivers one of the strongest performances on show, and that includes an excruciating supporting turn by Christopher Plummer as the benign emperor of the universe. The eminent character actor is clearly present in body, if not in mind. (He apparently only did the film because it afforded him the chance to holiday in Rome). It is from no discernable angle a good film, but it's a very entertaining one. There's more charm in Cozzi's apparently earnest, obviously half-cocked attempt to pay homage to Ray Harryhausen in the film's countless stop-frame space robots than there is in a thousand *Black Hole*s. The finale, which is essentially a lot of close-ups of a poorly constructed Airfix space station wrapped in fairy lights, is a jaw-dropping joy to behold – an example of no-fi psychedelia that comes dangerously close to transcendence.

Where *Star Wars* famously stole – sorry, "borrowed" – its plot from Akira Kurosawa's *The Hidden Fortress*, 1980's *Battle Beyond the Stars* pilfers from *The Seven Samurai*, as John-Boy Walton himself, Richard Thomas, is the geeky greenhorn pilot charged with assembling a rag-tag army to defeat some cackling overlord or other. This was another New World Pictures joint, and while production values were certainly a tad more luxe than those of *Starcrash*, imagination is notable by its absence. A special shout out should definitely go to James Cameron, whose early-career SFX work does much of the heavy lifting in this otherwise dreary outing which mixes kid -riendly space hijinx with accidental arm amputations and costumes worn by Australian model Sybil Danning which would otherwise only have been seen in the pages of *Penthouse*. This one stands as perhaps the most brazen *Star Wars* copycat, with A-Teamer George Peppard rocking up as "Space Cowboy", a grizzled gunslinger with a whiskey optic attached to his belt who may as well have been named Hans Olo.

With the straight *Star Wars* copies clearly not working out so well, in rolled the hybrid models. 1983's *Krull* cut the usual hero's journey through with cod-medieval trappings and, instead of Lightsabers, Ken Marshall's pouffy-haired Prince Colwyn was bequeathed a weapon that offered an answer to the question:

what if a boomerang looked more like a swastika? The budget swelled, egos clashed and it ended up a bridge too far for British-born Hollywood stalwart Peter Yates as audiences stayed away in their droves. Why would anyone flock to a film whose title sounds like a brand of synthetic deep sea fishing bait?

1980's *Hawk the Slayer* once more asset-strips the Kurosawa corpus – this time 1961's *Yojimbo* – in its search for *Star Wars* mana. It sees American TV actor John Terry step up to the plate as the eponymous Hawk who plays two evil brothers against one another and, eventually, relieves them of a powerful magic sword. Later, in 1984, we got David Lynch's *Dune,* which defined "batshit" before the term existed, and was marketed as a funtime space opera replete with collectable action figures and much landfill children's party merchandising. Yet upon even rudimentary inspection, this was still very much a David Lynch movie. That year we were also gifted Nick Castle's *The Last Starfighter*, a fascinating case of a fairly bad movie that attempts to leach from both *Star Wars*, and the sci-fi work of one Steven Spielberg, which had been accepted to the public bosom for precisely the reasons that these mostly wretched films were not (i.e., originality, a personal stamp, an actual storyline with actual characters, basic coherence, etc, etc).

The film takes place in a rural shithole which comprises a single rundown motel and some beat-up old armchairs. The only entertainment on offer involves either dumping some mattresses in the back of a pick-up along with a few demijohns of expired moonshine, or a tricked out arcade cabinet which plays a cruddy-looking flight sim game called 'The Last Starfighter'.

Lance Guest's Alex Rogan chooses the latter, and his mad gaming skills manage to coax out hoards of whooping grannies as they cheer him to an all-time record breaking score. Not long after that, at the point where Alex is starting to realise how utterly worthless his life (and his new record) is, he's recruited to do this shit for realsies by Robert Preston's Centauri, a humanoid alien who slides into town in a space car that looks suspiciously like a DeLorean, and plays a motor mouthed, white-haired oddball not unlike Christopher Lloyd's iconic Doc Brown.

As with many of its knock-off brethren, *The Last Starfighter* boasts some notable special effects, the majority of which comprise early forays into CGI. It's just a shame, then, that it's so unbearably earnest, and Alex himself is one of those heroes who most would be happy to see fired into the Sun. Flash forward to the present day, and there are companies such as The Asylum whose sole purpose is to punch out "mockbusters" aimed at people with middling brand awareness and poor eyesight. Yet this creative cul-de-sac is by no means exclusive to *Star Wars* – the concept of the counterfeit movie goes back to the very formulation of art as a monetisable discipline. You can rest assured that, as long as movies are being churned out at the rate they currently are, if people like them, then more will be made. Thanks, Alan...

WOMAN OF THE DUNES

The authors of a new book on the films of Studio Ghibli draw interesting parallels between Frank Herbert's 'Dune' – and the debut feature by Hayao Miyazaki, *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*.

Words by **MICHAEL LEADER AND JAKE CUNNINGHAM** Illustration by **RUMBIDZAI SAVANHU**

Michael Leader: As co-hosts of the podcast Ghibliotheque, and now co-authors of the book of the same name, Jake and I are absolute professionals at shoehorning the films of Studio Ghibli into any conversation. You don't need to ask us twice to chart the overlaps, crossovers and potential parallels between Frank Herbert's 1965 literary space opera 'Dune' and Miyazaki's own eco sci-fi epic *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, from 1984. And besides, the connections are clear, and help illuminate not just both works, but the industrial engines behind their complicated journeys to the big screen, too. Honest.

Now considered something of an all-time anime classic, *Nausicaä* takes pride of place at the very start of the Studio Ghibli story. However, when it was made, Hayao Miyazaki was far from a 'name' director when it came to feature-length animation, having only helmed the *Lupin III* spin-off movie *Castle of Cagliostro* in 1979; and, of course, Studio Ghibli itself didn't even exist. It was the dream of eventual Ghibli president and long-standing producer Toshio Suzuki, then the editor of the magazine *Animage* and an avowed fan of Miyazaki's work, to give the director a theatrical canvas for his vision. It fell to Suzuki to convince the higher-ups at his publisher, Tokuma Shoten, to back Miyazaki and foot the bill for a feature. But they had one condition: the project had to have a proven, built-in audience of fans, and the best way to secure that was to start *Nausicaä* as a manga in the pages of *Animage*.

Jake Cunningham: *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* may not have been born with the Ghibli name (although now it's retroactively included in their filmography), but from the tips of its protagonist's digits, which live eternally in a now-iconic thumbs-up reaction .gif, to her chunky blue thigh-highs, which stream behind when she's flying the fan-beloved glider Mehve, *Nausicaä* is every bit a Ghibli family member. Her genetic line can be seen blowing through Miyazaki's filmography, in the compassionate and pragmatic heroines of *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Princess Mononoke*, the ecstatic environmentalists Mei and Satsuki from *My Neighbour Totoro* and the fearless goldfish-born adventurer, *Ponyo*.

Online, Miyazaki has been memed into being the grumpy old man of animation, but throughout his career, the directorial statements issued with his films were often focused on his younger viewers. He saw *Nausicaä*, a warrior princess born into a poisoned world, battling a war between monstrous giant insects and even more monstrous people, not as an apocalyptic omen, but "to offer a sense of liberation to present-day young people". Accompanied by a thrillingly eclectic synth score from Joe Hisaishi, caught in a heady maelstrom of politics, industrial-sized aerial dogfighting and environmental activism, *Nausicaä* sacrifices herself in the pursuit of harmony between the flora and fauna of her world.

ML: *Nausicaä* is the proto-Ghibli film, no doubt about it, and its success at the Japanese box office proved that Toshio Suzuki was on to something. With Miyazaki directing, his mentor Isao Takahata producing and Hisaishi providing a soaring score, the dream team behind many future Ghibli hits had been assembled. Everything is set in motion here, even Miyazaki and co's tricky relationship with international distribution.

In 1985, *Nausicaä* was released in the States by New World Pictures in a butchered 95-minute English-dubbed version retitled *Warriors of the Wind*, which recast the film as more of a space opera in the mould of *Star Wars* and (you guessed it) *Dune*. Like David Lynch's adaptation from the previous year, *Warriors of the Wind* had been wrested from its filmmaker's grips, recut and 'simplified' for its US theatrical release. *Warriors of the Wind*'s baffling poster showed characters standing astride a God Warrior, one of the film's fearsome, biomechanical weapons of mass destruction, as if it were a sandworm from Arrakis. Back in Japan, the filmmakers were less than impressed.

Interestingly, while Miyazaki's love of English-language sci-fi and fantasy is well-known, it's unclear whether he drew any specific inspiration from *Dune*. There's a delightful but seemingly apocryphal claim that the giant, insect-like 'ohmu' from *Nausicaä* are so-named due to the Japanese pronunciation of the latter half of the word 'sandworm'. However, Miyazaki has acknowledged that the detailed line art of the *Nausicaä* manga was heavily influenced by the work of French comics legend Moebius, whose extraordinary concept art and storyboards for Alejandro Jodorowsky's *Dune*, sadly, never made it to the big screen.

JC: 'Dune' fans who got their first taste of Frank Herbert's original text and were hungry for more were rewarded with various sequels and prequel books that expanded the spice rack. Similarly, Nausicaä's adventure continued in the pages of *Animage* magazine, but viewers drawn in by the environmentalist parable seen in the film will be in for a shock.

Completed in 1994, Miyazaki's manga offers a sprawling, complex and morally murkier expansion to the story. Seen as a messianic figure in the film – her resurrection marking the climax of the story – in the manga, *Nausicaä* is more of a warrior-conduit between humanity and the environment of her world. A dramatic animist philosophy unfurls across the 1,000 page tome, with Nausicaä pursuing the destruction of her anthropocentric world, becoming a 'mother' to the God Warrior sentient Kaiju-like weapon, and ultimately choosing to commit genocide in the hope of environmental unity.

"Nausicaä ultimately choses to commit genocide in the hope of environmental unity."

ML: Lynch and Miyazaki both left their epic sci-fi projects profoundly changed. The former never made a film like it again, while Miyazaki remarked that the 'lighter' works he had made while creating the *Nausicaä* manga were so because he preferred to pour all of his complex, darker, 'serious' ideas onto the page rather than the screen. In 1994 Miyazaki found himself, in his own words, staring out into an 'incomprehensible world' — a conflict he wrestled with in another environmental epic, 1997's *Princess Mononoke*. Another smash hit, followed by another US distribution deal. This time Suzuki had the foresight to present then-Miramax chief Harvey 'Scissorhands' Weinstein with a gift – a sword, accompanied with a simple message: 'No cuts'

'Ghibliotheque: The Unofficial Guide to the Movies of Studio Ghibli' is published by Welbeck on 2 September, 2021.

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THEY SHOOT, HE SCORES

Dune composer Hans Zimmer explains how he channels the classics in an eclectic range of film scores.

Words and interview by **LILLIAN CRAWFORD** Illustration by **RUMBIDZAI SAVANHU**

After hearing Hans Zimmer's score for Denis Villeneuve's *Dune*, I asked if we could talk about his influences. The music in *Dune* is a rich choral soundscape which departs from his iconic French-horn and blasts of electric guitar. Where did those sounds come from? "You mean the people I stole from? All of them?!" He's joking, but his response touches on a strange criticism targeted at film composers. They're accused of plagiarising classical music when it's more accurate to cite inspiration. I decided to delve deeper into his classical taste.

Zimmer's compositions are steeped in the music he grew up with in Frankfurt in the 1960s. He only had two weeks of piano lessons and was expelled from eight schools. His musical education came from hearing German composers like Bach and Beethoven, and today he is the most prolific film composer in the world. He's already done five scores this year, ranging from *Dune* to *The Boss Baby: Family Business*.

When Zimmer was 12, he crept into Sergio Leone's *Once Upon a Time in the West* and was entranced by Ennio Morricone's score. The music is sweeping and lyrical, grounded in the Italian romance – distinct from Zimmer's bold and brassy German accent. He paid homage to Morricone in the 'Parlay' theme from *Pirates of the Caribbean* by playing his famous 'Man with a Harmonica' refrain on an electric guitar. When Zimmer listens to *Once Upon a Time in the West*, he hears not Vivaldi or Puccini but Bach and Mozart – Germanic composers. "Bach's music is beautiful. Everybody thinks of Bach as being so serious and then you get his crab canons and his playfulness, which is vital to me." Zimmer has worked with a large contingent of Hollywood's A-list directors, so this sense of fun and experimentation is essential to his compositional versatility.

Zimmer combines this approach with an infectious quasi-religious sensibility. "It's complicated – I'm an atheist coming from an atheist family and then sometimes you hear Bach and you see God." The best composers are conscious of the space in which their music will be heard. When Zimmer scored *Interstellar*, he used the organ in Temple Church so the resonance created was caught in the recording, bringing the reverb of an ecclesiastical space into the cinema.

The Hungarian film theorist Béla Balázs described cinema as "a new sensory organ", claiming films combine sight and hearing as simultaneous sensations. Belázs was influenced by Richard Wagner, whose aim in opera was to create a total artwork, or Gesamtkunstwerk. The apotheosis of this was 'Der Ring des Nibelungen', a four-opera epic akin to the modern movie franchise.

Hating the distractions of ornate opera houses, Wagner designed the Bayreuth Festspielhaus to ensure every viewer was equally immersed. The Festspielhaus is a darkened auditorium with a concealed orchestra – the architectural predecessor of the cinema. Zimmer agrees, although he says, "You really don't want to be associated with Wagner or Carl Orff, that most awful, beastly, politically-incorrect composer." That being said, the music they wrote influenced several of Zimmer's scores. His music for *True Romance* reinvented Orff's xylophone piece 'Gassenhauer', and Zimmer says the *Gladiator* score "is Wagner". He remembers thinking Commodus' entry into Rome looked like a scene by Leni Riefenstahl, the director of 1935 Nazi propaganda film *Triumph of the Will*, itself inspired by Wagner's 'Ring'.

Wagner also developed the leitmotif, a musical idea or phrase associated with a certain character, thing, or place. Zimmer admits he "likes the idea of leitmotifs", although he will "try to hide the character behind it." He continues: "A leitmotif doesn't have to be an *idée fixe,* à la Berlioz. We are at a stage where technology allows us to make the leitmotif just a sonic signature. Which is actually quite nice because then we can go and deal with the animal-like psychology of the character in a much more in depth way than just the signature of a leitmotif."

When Zimmer worked with James Newton Howard on *The Dark Knight*, they used their distinctive musical sensibilities to create unique leitmotifs for each character, such as the two villains – the Joker and Harvey Dent. Zimmer's theme for the Joker is horribly atonal, a stretched two-note motif moving from C to D played by slashing razor blades against cello strings. Dent's theme was written by Howard as an American fanfare in the vein of Aaron Copland, a brassy symbol of a patriotic figure which becomes more dissonant as Dent becomes Two-Face.

Sometimes themes come from outside influences, such as the music Zimmer wrote for Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes*. "I live on Dean Street [in London] and I could imagine walking down Dean Street in Victorian times and every corner having a pub with somebody playing something, and if you just stood still in the middle you could hear this cacophony of out-of-tune pianos, brilliantly-played violins, and cimberloms. That became the leitmotif." In cases like the Joker, it's a simple note; for others, like *Sherlock*, it's a whole cacophonous ensemble. Wagner wrote that "it is not the individual, but only the community, that can bring artistic deeds to actual accomplishment." It's a maxim Zimmer lives by, collaborating with composers and musicians in his studio to produce unique scores. When he didn't know how to create the leitmotif for *Wonder Woman*, he improvised with cellist Tina Guo to find the right sound. "Tina's the most soft-spoken, quiet Chinese lady until she grabs her cello as if it was a sword and she goes to war. I just got her into her Amazon mode."

“I’m having a hard enough time with Brexit to even hang on to my residence permit. I think I would be turfed out of England instantly if I didn’t do *Bond* justice.”

Sometimes when Zimmer takes on a new franchise, he starts from scratch. For *Man of Steel*, Zimmer rejected the iconic John Williams *Superman* fanfare for something closer to home, an understated theme for a small farm in Kansas. “Superman’s weakness isn’t kryptonite, it’s that all he really wants to do is belong to the human race, which is the one thing he cannot do.” Elsewhere Zimmer keeps the original music, such as in his score for the new James Bond movie, *No Time to Die*. “I’m having a hard enough time with Brexit to even hang on to my residence permit. I think I would be turfed out of England instantly if I didn’t do *Bond* justice.” He knew John Barry, who composed the early *Bond* scores, and just wanted to push what he did a bit further. “There’s enough sand in the sandbox that we can all play with that. There’s a terrible egotistical thing that composers always think that they need to go and reinvent everything and make it their own. But it’s never really their own.”

For *Dune*, Zimmer decided to go against the trend for science fiction soundtracks. He recalls seeing *Star Wars* as a child: “I didn’t understand that it’s set ‘In a galaxy far, far away’ and I heard French horns and cellos and violins. I thought, ‘Wow, they haven’t really moved along!’ So for *Dune* I asked, ‘Where do we want to go?’ We want to be left with the one thing which is true, which is the human voice. Everything else, let’s go and invent!”

The female choir used for the *Dune* music lends an ethereal quality to the landscape. Zimmer felt the most powerful characters are the women so he wanted their voices to drive his score. This is retained from Frank Herbert’s novel which features songs Zimmer and Villeneuve planned to include in the film. “Denis is going to beat me up but I’m going to say it anyway. We did record all the songs in the book – we could actually do an album with all the songs. But I think to protect the innocent we might just not do that for now.”

What we hear being sung in *Dune* is an alien language which allowed Zimmer to rely on his melodies and *leitmotifs* rather than words to tell the story. “We tried to not write Middle-Eastern music, but to write music that was influenced by the desert. Something that would harmonise with the wind, the wind through the rocks, across the vast plains of sand. It whistles in a certain way. For thousands and thousands of years the music has been shaped and bent just like the rocks would be shaped and bent by an inhospitable climate.” It’s a beautiful description of how music changes, always adapting but retaining something of the past in its DNA. Zimmer’s scores contain the all signatures of his influences, and in turn, he will influence the film music makers of a future world

The Veil

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COY *you choose* SAD

UP YOUR TULLE GAME

Works at WEDDINGS & FUNERALS

Words by **CHRISTINA NEWLAND** *Illustration by* **LAURÉNE BOGLIO**

#18 Threads

The Veil

When someone uses the idiom 'beyond the veil', it connotes the thin divide between this world and the next; an indication of something mystical and unknown. The phrase is said to derive from an inner sanctum in the Temple of Jerusalem, which is concealed by a veil; nothing could be more on the nose in pointing out the ancient religious power of the item. Be it within Islam, Judaism, or Christianity, there's a long and complicated history of covering a face – usually a woman's – with a veil. When we see a veiled lady on screen – whether her coverings are bridal, burqa, or mourning gear – we can be sure that the filmmaker is signalling something important to us about her role, status, and maybe her character.

Veils feel inherently cinematic, teasing out the planes and layers of an image. They are about seeing and not seeing; usually through a thin membrane of lace, netting, chiffon, or some other semi-sheer fabric. The wearer's vision is often limited by them, too, once again recalling the limitations – and compositions – of the camera frame. Whether we are looking out of one and looking back at someone wearing one, there's something liminal about the veil.

Perhaps the most vision-obscuring veils (both for the viewer and the wearer) are the ones worn for religious purposes, as with the burqa or the niqab among some segments of Muslim women. The niqab is worn in a wide variety of ways; in films like Abderrahmane Sissako's *Timbuktu* (2014), the invading jihadist forces make demands for increasingly conservative clothing, taking away the free will of the women. Yet in a movie like Saudi Arabian director Haifaa al-Mansour's *The Perfect Candidate* (2019), a young woman runs for office and holds a women-only fundraiser staged as a beautiful niqab fashion show, offering a pointed and political rejoinder to the idea that Saudi women who wear the garment are simply oppressed.

The most ubiquitous place we see veils on screen, though, are at weddings. You may think of Julia Roberts with her veil billowing behind her in *Runaway Bride* (1999), or the tens of dozens of other mainstream Hollywood films featuring big weddings: Elizabeth Taylor in pristine white lace, the picture of '50s femininity, for *Father of the Bride* (1950); or Shari Headley's grandiose, sparkling veil fitting of a royal wedding in the finale of *Coming to America* (1988). In truth, the modern popularity of the wedding veil (though just as often these days worn off the face entirely) and the customary lifting of the veil as the bride reaches the altar were intended to underline a bride's modesty and purity. Those virtues – and the veil along with it – were brought back into vogue by Queen Victoria, a devout Christian, during her 1840 wedding ceremony. And so, even in films that are entirely secular, veils are mostly worn in scenes that hark back to religious traditions: marriages and mourning rituals.

It might seem like the antithesis of the happy occasion of the wedding, but the funeral is another cinematic hotspot for the veil, this time in black. Audrey Hepburn dons a netted one in *Charade* (1963); so too does Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind* (1939). In Victorian times, mourning veils were expected to be worn for up to three months – so why not make it look good? Glamorous widows and mysterious women who may or may not be up to no good use the veil to hide their intense emotions, be they grief (see: Natalie Portman in *Jackie*) or hidden glee (Barbara Stanwyck in *Double Indemnity*). An arbiter of both these ancient rites comes together in Tim Burton's *The Corpse Bride* (2015), a dark stop-motion animation of a ghostly bride, with tattered veil and all, coming to claim a living husband. Maybe a veil denoting purity and circumspection is so entrenched that it becomes the perfect disguise for a dangerous woman. Faye Dunaway, looking out from under her veiled hat in *Chinatown* (1976), certainly has something to hide.

If the black veil is indicative of something more sinister, all the evidence is right there: predatory vampire Catherine Deneuve wears one dotted with pearls in *The Hunger* (1983), as does Hanna Schygulla, the morally bereft murderess of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *The Marriage of Maria Braun* (1978). After all, the veil literally helps to conceal one's face, disguising motivations, feelings, and maybe even identity. The ancient, religious power of the veil still hangs heavy over the face of modern movies; but then, its potent sense of mystery always gives girls a chance to get away with murder

THE DUNE ISSUE

REVIEW CONTENTS

Interview by **HANNAH STRONG** *Illustration by* **ADRIANA BELLET**

Sparks

Pop-rock deities Ron and Russell Mael on how they (finally!) landed a major movie collaboration with Leos Carax and his new musical epic, Annette.

Ron and Russell Mael – better known as Sparks – have been making music for five decades, but this year has been all about the movies for them. First came Edgar Wright's documentary *The Sparks Brothers*, an affectionate, expansive primer on their career featuring a whole host of famous faces paying tribute to their pioneering musical endeavours, and now comes the release of their long-awaited musical epic *Annette*, which was first announced in 2016. Directed by French auteur Leos Carax, the rock-opera tells of a stand-up comedian (Adam Driver) and revered soprano (Marion Cotillard) whose young daughter is born with an incredible gift.

LWLies: You met Leos Carax at Cannes several years ago, did you instantly feel like kindred spirits? Russell Mael: Yeah we met him initially at Cannes just to thank him for using one of Sparks' songs from an older album ('How Are You Getting Home?') in *Holy Motors*. He expressed that he'd been a big fan of Sparks since he was young and we got along really well with him. He's a singular sort of person, a unique guy, but we connected and felt that there was a kinship between us in a certain way. We got back to LA and had this project that we thought was going to be our next album, but we sent it to Leos just for him to hear what we were up to, and he got back to us and said, 'God, I really like this thing,' and a couple of weeks later he said, 'I'd like to direct this for my next film'. Eight years elapsed where we worked with him in Paris and LA refining elements of the story, but we finally locked in with a really great producer, Charles Gillibert, and he was so focused on getting this done. Once Adam and Marion Cotillard signed on it started to move along a lot quicker.

It's interesting to hear you originally planned on *Annette* being an album – I did wonder, having done 'The Seduction of Ingmar Bergman', why you decided that this should be a film. Was that entirely Leos' idea? Russell: Yeah, we didn't ever imagine it as a film actually. We just thought of it as a stage presentation. Ron would play the conductor character, and I would play the Adam Driver role – that's a stretch but I'd do it – and then we would have a female opera singer join us, who would play the Marion Cotillard role, and we could tour it because there were fewer characters. We really wanted to tour with 'The Seduction of Ingmar Bergman' but there were 11 or 12 principal characters so it was just prohibitive to tour with that many people, plus a band. We did one performance of it at the LA Film Festival, but our initial reason for doing *Annett*e was, 'There's fewer characters, let's do that' and then it morphed into an actual story.

Leos is credited with lyrics alongside the two of you. How did that creative partnership work? Ron: A film is the most collaborative art form really, so when you enter into working on a film you have to relinquish some of the control you have as a musician. With Sparks we're completely in control and with other music projects that we've collaborated on, you're still working within an area that you're comfortable with. With a film, you really have to have a different mindset, but the one good thing is that the basic sensibility of the film and even the basic music and lyrics were retained by Leos. He's such a personal director, he did want to inject some of his feelings, in particular about the lyrics and maybe adding a couple of pieces that weren't there, but it never was contrary to the original sensibility of *Annette*.

You're always a little bit wary of your child getting messed up by somebody, but it's Leos Carax so you make adjustments. Then with actors taking over the singing roles, that's another adjustment you have to make, and we had a discussion probably close to five years ago with Adam Driver about the style of the singing, because obviously it wouldn't be exactly like Russell's. We didn't want it to be going off into the Broadway showboating kind of thing, and he was really aware of that, and making sure his singing was more naturalistic. Both he and Marion did an extraordinary job. We had a short period in New York where both the two principal actors were there and we went over all the music in a studio with them, so everyone felt really comfortable. Then when it came down to the actual shooting, we were there for most of it in Brussels and Germany and then back in LA, but we wanted to stay out

“Tati was a little like Leos – these people that have the most singular visions and are so respected often find it so difficult to get mainstream money.”

of it because it seemed unfair at that point to get in the way of either Leos or the actors and we felt comfortable with what the direction had been during the rehearsals.

Given how long Adam Driver has been attached to the project, was there a sense when you met him that he was completely right for the role of Henry McHenry? Russell: We were absolutely sold with Adam from the very beginning, especially when we met with him early on to discuss the type of singing. When he first came over to my place, I have a studio and we thought he was actually gonna sing even that first day, to kind of show us. We said, ‘Do you wanna do something?’ and he said, ‘I’m really not prepared, I don’t wanna do it now in front of you.’ But just discussing stylistically what it would be and the types of musicals we all like and don’t like... and when you see him acting on stage it’s something different, never in a million years could I do what he did, you know he brought it to another level. It felt like someone coming from a band rather than somebody coming from Broadway, trying to show you how well they can sing. It was more restrained and naturalistic. On the set he was really conscious of our feelings too – one day he said to us, ‘Man I hope I’m not fucking up your music’ [Laughs] No! *Au contraire!*

I’m really curious about *Confusion*, the film you were supposed to make with Jacques Tati which is mentioned in *The Sparks Brothers* documentary. What was the plan? Russell: During the mid-’70s, someone at Island Records wanted to approach him because they thought that there was a certain sensibility that we shared. We were like two little universes running side by side in a certain way. In any case, they contacted him and he had been working on this project called *Confusion* and he was really interested to talk with us and we got along really well with him. We went to Paris several times and met with him, and we were going to be in this next movie of his, about a rural French television company that was kind of inept and disconnected from the modern technology that Hollywood had. So we were two American TV guys coming over to help this small provincial French TV company. I was gonna be a TV director and Ron was more of a technician, and so Tati had gags already prepared, like his things are less plot-driven and more a lot of situations that just happen. That was the premise, and we met with him several times in Paris, but we were aware of his problems getting movies financed. He was a little like Leos – these people that have the most singular visions and are so respected often find it so difficult to get mainstream money to support them.

That was one of the issues Tati was having, and then also his health was not the best it had been. Unfortunately he never made another movie, but we had one really great souvenir. Sweden had a real bond with Tati and they asked us to come and do a TV show together with him. There were no parameters to it, he said, ‘They must get a white horse for me!’ So they had this white horse on the set. We don’t remember tonnes about it, and there’s been so much research done trying to find the archival footage but no one can find it. Even after Edgar [Wright]’s research they’re trying desperately to find it but nobody could come up with it. In any case, we went on the TV show with him. We remember the white horse and him wanting to interact with this horse, and then us just there doing our thing, whatever that is.

Ron: The first time we saw Tati, we were in a Hilton hotel and he walked in just like Monsieur Hulot with the tan overcoat and that kinda gait. He always insisted on getting public transport so he could just study people all the time. We would go out to dinner with him and he would kind of mimic – not in a cruel way – the movements of the waitress. He was always, at least in our experience, always that Tati Hulot character and it was extraordinary. He was very serious when he was working, of course. He had the gags and all, but it wasn’t like he was cracking up. I think the other thing that he shares with Leos is that both of them probably have only maybe six films, just because they’re so precise and personal in what they’re doing. We’re so disappointed that the film didn’t work out, but we cherish the time that we were able to spend with him

Annette

Directed by **LEOS CARAX**
Starring **ADAM DRIVER, MARION COTILLARD, SIMON HELBERG**
Released **3 SEPTEMBER**

ANTICIPATION. 5
French maverick Carax makes his long-awaited return to cinema after 2012's Holy Motors.

ENJOYMENT. 4
A disorientating, singular vision of peerless creativity.

IN RETROSPECT. 5
Vive le cinéma, vive la différence!

When I was about 13, my grandmother took me to the opera for the first time. We went to see 'Carmen'. I fell asleep fairly early on and only woke up when the flamenco dancing started. Nevertheless, I enjoyed the experience, and this instigated a pattern over the years whereby my grandma would take me to see all her favourite shows: 'Madame Butterfly', 'La bohème', 'La traviata'. I was frequently baffled, often enraptured. And so it goes for Leos Carax's *Annette*.

Anyone familiar with the music of Ron and Russell Mael (aka the genre-defying musical duo Sparks) knows they have little interest in what the Public At Large wants, or indeed likes. Their five decades in the business have produced 25 studio albums, a radio opera about Ingmar Bergman, and an unproduced Jacques Tati film to name just a few highlights. They are something of an acquired taste, which makes them a perfect fit for Carax's surrealist sensibilities, not to mention the envelope-pushing interests of Hollywood's great hope, Adam Driver.

The story goes as so: Henry McHenry (Driver), motorcycle-riding bad boy stand-up comedian, is madly in love with Ann Defrasnoux (Marion Cotillard), a revered soprano. Their whirlwind romance results in a marriage and a gifted daughter – named Annette – but Henry's jealousy and inability to let love overrule his deep-seated self-loathing spells impending doom.

Annette has been described somewhat inaccurately as a musical, but eschews the Broadway tradition of catchy songs and carefully choreographed dance routines. In true Sparks style, it's an ambitious, audacious rock opera, complete with much-feted musical cunnilingus and an enchantingly off putting marionette. It's sprawling and self-indulgent and completely bizarre. It is quite possibly a masterpiece.

Driver's performance is one of full-bodied enthusiasm and physicality, channelling the spirit of Denis Lavant in Carax's 1991 film *The Lovers on the Bridge*. His gravelly voice and commanding screen presence are compelling enough to forgive the narrative transgressions (a strange nod to #MeToo probably should have stayed in the writer's room). Cotillard proves the perfect foil as a woman betrayed by love in the classic operatic tradition. The role was initially attached to Rooney Mara and then Michelle Williams, but it's impossible to imagine anyone else playing Ann with such a clear sense of tragic naivety.

Annette won't be for everyone, yet it's hard to argue against the ambition and originality of this outrageous love story. Although the film draws from the history of cinema and musicals and calls to mind all manner of other media, it manages to feel entirely unique – earnest and honest and just a little pretentious. As a singular artistic vision about toxic, self-loathing men, bad parenting and the grotesque, all-consuming theatre of performance, *Annette* is a triumph. What a joy to live at the same time as artists who are willing to plunge themselves headfirst into the creative abyss and let us bear witness from the stands, fidgeting nervously as we long for an encore. **HANNAH STRONG**

The French Dispatch

Directed by **WES ANDERSON**
Starring **FRANCES MCDORMAND, TILDA SWINTON, BILL MURRAY**
Released **22 OCTOBER**

Wes Anderson's tenth feature film seems tailor-made to appeal to movie lovers who also appreciate the art of print journalism. Concerning the foreign bureau of the fictional *Liberty Kansas Evening Sun* newspaper, *The French Dispatch* follows three separate storylines gathered together within the supplement's final issue, to be released upon the passing of its founder and editor-in-chief, Arthur Howitzer Jr (Bill Murray).

These dispatches take the form of a travelogue filed by cycling enthusiast Herbsaint Sazerac (Owen Wilson), an arts report from JKL Berensen (Tilda Swinton), a political investigation by Lucinda Krementz (Frances McDormand) and a food column written by Roebuck Wright (Jeffrey Wright), bookended by a prologue and epilogue detailing the paper's past and present. These stories are depicted in typically offbeat Andersonian fashion: Berensen delivers a symposium about the incarcerated artist Moses Rosenthaler (Benicio del Toro) and his muse, prison guard Simone (Léa Seydoux); Krementz reports on student revolutionaries Zeffirelli B (Timothée Chalamet) and Juliette (Lyna Khoudri). Perhaps the most moving of the segments is the final one, in which Wright's reporter – inspired by James Baldwin – reflects on an encounter with famed police chef Lt. Nescafier (Stephen Park) during a kidnapping case.

Anderson has pointed to *New Yorker* magazine as his grand inspiration, and this shines through without ever feeling too insular or alienating to those unfamiliar with the publication. The film manages to portray that strident spirit with the kind of quick-witted, intricate dialogue we've come to expect from this gifted writer, interlaced with memorable plotlines that wouldn't feel out of place in a highbrow periodical. A cartoon sequence is a particularly lovely touch, reminiscent of the *New Yorker*'s famed illustrated covers.

The French Dispatch is Anderson's most impressionistic and unusual film, not to mention his most ambitious. The sprawling cast list might have once looked intimidating, but they flit in and out of frame, adding colour and life to the headlines. Even though many A-listers only get a line or two, they are all well-utilised (Bob Balaban and Henry Winkler as near-silent uncles to Adrien Brody's art dealer is a particularly wonderful touch).

It certainly won't convert any Wes naysayers – his intricate stylistic quirks are on full on display, and some familiarity with the *New Yorker* will help make sense of finer details, including the dedications list at the end of the film. But Anderson never lacks for heart and soul, with artful considerations of love, liberty and what lives on after we die. Much like any print classic, it begs to be poured over again and again. **HANNAH STRONG**

ANTICIPATION. 4
New Wes is always a treat, but that's an ambitious cast list by anyone's standards.

ENJOYMENT. 4
A bold, beautifully-rendered celebration of storytelling.

IN RETROSPECT. 5
This one stays with you; Anderson at his melancholy best.

Respect

Directed by **LIESL TOMMY**
Starring **JENNIFER HUDSON, FOREST WHITAKER, MARLON WAYANS**
Released **24 JULY**

ANTICIPATION.
A biopic years in the making with Hudson chosen by Aretha herself.

4

ENJOYMENT.
Never quite blows you away but it's well cast and showcases the vocals we came to hear.

3

IN RETROSPECT.
Make sure you check out the amazing Aretha concert film, Amazing Grace.

3

Jennifer Hudson rose to fame as a contestant on American Idol before an oscar-winning turn as Effie White in 2006's *Dreamgirls* catapulted her into stardom. She is now a permanent fixture across music, film and television. Talented and likeable enough to make it out of 2019's *Cats* relatively unscathed, and directly approved by Aretha Franklin herself, Hudson now portrays the legendary Queen of Soul in Liesl Tommy's feature directorial debut, *Respect*.

We meet Franklin in 1952 as a mild-mannered pre-teen, and discover that, from the age of 12, she grew up singing gospel to packed church congregations and was the daughter of prominent Detroit pastor, CL (Forest Whitaker), who took on her management duties. Whitaker is well cast, his trademark soft-spoken gravitas here channelled as quiet domination. Well-versed in the Booker T Washington school of Black respectability politics, CL is keen to market Franklin as a distinctly sanitised act, and he is vocal in his disdain for more risqué singers such as Billie Holiday. Shopping her to record labels, CL's voice booms over a muted Franklin as he negotiates her deals and dictates song selections. Growing into an artist with multiple albums, yet no real hits, Franklin marries producer Ted White (Marlon Wayans) who similarly places his own perceived expertise over Franklin's desire to expand her artistry. Both men seek to shape Franklin through their own ideals, demanding a level of respect and reverence while covering their own moral failings and doling out abuse in return.

It's no easy feat playing Franklin throughout her development from a meek young woman to a defiant, and at times troubled, superstar, and Hudson's efforts in this pursuit are clear. She takes great pains to make sure that she doesn't just match the vocal prowess of the real Aretha that many will expect and have expressly come to see, but she also tries to mirror Franklin's cadence, and give what feels like a deeply passionate performance. However, some of these efforts, while admirable, can appear too noticeable and she never quite disappears into the role. She is at her best when recreating Franklin's memorable vocal performances, Hudson finally becoming one with her subject at the film's close – the soul stirring 1978 gospel concert that would become 2018's documentary feature, *Amazing Grace*.

Respect is a thoroughly decent film. Thankfully much better edited and structured than Lee Daniels' recent *The United States Vs Billie Holiday* (a very noticeable jump from Franklin being played as a 10-year-old, then by Hudson a mere seven years later notwithstanding), it's a steady debut from Tommy that is well-contextualised and thoughtful, using Franklin's life and the civil rights movement to explore various notions of what respect really means. While it may not be the barnstorming spectacle one might hope for, Franklin fans and casual viewers alike will leave with a true sense of and belief in Franklin's talent, tenacity and iconic status, making it a fitting tribute.

CHEYENNE BUNSIE

Interview by **CHARLES BRAMESCO** *Illustration by* **ADRIANA BELLET**

Cary Joji Fukunaga

How does someone get to make a James Bond movie? With considerable difficulty, says No Time to Die *director, Cary Joji Fukunaga.*

Following a string of indie hits, Cary Joji Fukunaga has landed at the helm of a venerated Hollywood franchise with *No Time to Die* (released 30 September), the final outing as 007 for star Daniel Craig. Though he's used to a humbler operation, Fukunaga rose to the occasion, finding that the job is the same however epic the proportions.

LWLies: How does a director find himself in a rarefied, high-profile job like this? Is there a vetting process? Fukunaga: Right after *Spectre*, I requested a general interview with Barbara Broccoli in New York. We had a drink, and I put my name in the hat, or at least asked for them to consider my name for the hat. It was just a friendly conversation, and I was willing to leave it at that, not thinking much about it – until I was on vacation around the time Boyle parted ways years later, and I called them to express how interested I still was. Then came meetings with the producers, with Barbara and with Michael G Wilson and Gregg Wilson, meetings with Daniel Craig, story meetings for a month, and then suddenly I was in London; showtime.

In terms of scale, this is much bigger than any of your previous work. Have you always wanted to pursue a film of this size? I've always liked the idea of trying my hand at what could be classified as a tentpole or blockbuster-type film. I've never had any preconceived notions about the path my career would take, I've just done what feels right moment by moment. But I knew after *Sin Nombre* that I didn't want to do another gritty thriller, that I wanted to try out a different genre and style. That's why I did *Jane Eyre*. I'd never considered doing a Southern Gothic crime series until *True Detective* came my way. I had conversations with the studios that produce this kind of thing, Marvel or Lucasfilm, but there was nothing that sparked an immediate passion in me.

The budget for this film is also significantly larger than any you've had before. Were there new things available for you to try out that you haven't had access to in the past? In terms of toys, not necessarily. We used the same equipment I've always used. As big a budget as it is, you still have discussions with the line producer about how many days you can afford to have a crane. You start to see the money on scale. It's in the size of the crew, the size of the production units, the number of units operating at once, the number of locations. We'd fill entire airplanes, just us, going from one place to another. It was a massive endeavour. We opened production companies in every country we shot in – Jamaica, Norway, Italy, Scotland, Faroe Islands, everywhere. It's like you're making five films at the same time.

***No Time to Die* turned into an industry bellwether, with all the reshuffling and delays around Covid. What was it like to hold that kind of status?** No pressure there. [laughs] The news articles from last fall about how we were going to be the destruction of the theater industry by delaying, that sucked, frankly. You want the film to have the best chance it can when it comes out. You also want theaters to stay open, we don't want to turn into a niche artform. But none of this could be predicted or planned for... We're talking again now as we approach October, and I feel a complete sense of release from it. I joked when I said no pressure, but at this point, it's been long enough that I'm actually not feeling any pressure. I'd just like people to show up.

I'd heard that you requested a copy of of Sergei Bondarchuk's *War and Peace* be sent to set for a screening. Is that an influence on any recent work? Ha, well, I've been working on completing Kubrick's unfinished Napoleon project for about five years now with [Steven] *Spielberg*. I brought in Jan Harlan, who is Christiane Kubrick's brother and a producer on the project, and I wanted to show him that as something close to what Stanley might have wanted his vision of *Napoleon* to look like. It's an epic film like no other.

Do you intend to continue on in the studio system? I will probably do a smaller film next. I'd like to do something with a small cast, small crew, less fuss about the other needs that come with a bigger production. I'll do one about two people talking in a café. I always say that, and I never do, but maybe now I will

The Nest

Directed by	**SEAN DURKIN**
Starring	**CARRIE COON, JUDE LAW, OONA ROCHE**
Released	**27 AUGUST**

ANTICIPATION. 4
Jude Law and Carrie Coon should be a match made in heaven (or marriage hell).

ENJOYMENT. 4
Electrifying performances and a stark evocation of the 1980s. Not a leg warmer in sight.

IN RETROSPECT. 4
A gripping, handsomely crafted drama with two

A wary wife is persuaded by her slippery husband to up sticks from New York to an isolated English mansion – sounds like the beginning of a ghost story. And, even though nothing goes bump in the night exactly, ominous clouds of impending doom gather over the characters in Sean Durkin's *The Nest*. The film's real villain – rampant neoliberalism – also proves more frightening than the contents of a haunted house.

Having garnered praise for his debut feature, 2011's unsettling *Martha Marcy May Marlene*, writer/director Durkin then went a bit quiet. *The Nest* marks his return to the big screen after almost a decade, and what a welcome return it is. Fronted by two knockout performances, this is a tense, riveting portrait of a family fracturing beneath the veneer of 1980s excess. With Reagan in the White House and Thatcher in Downing Street there is money to be made for someone like Jude Law's Rory O'Hara. Slick and silver-tongued, he's just a little too jubilant when he beats his 10-year-old son at football. His insatiable ambition becomes clear when he insists to his sceptical American wife Allison (Carrie Coon) that they should move yet again, this time all the way from New York to Surrey, supposedly because business has dried up and he misses London. It's the perfect role for Law, a compelling yet repulsive blend of charm and recklessness.

"It's not your job to worry. You leave that to your husband," Allison's mother tells her. Initially her fears are quelled as they settle in to their stunning Tudor manor and Rory starts building her a stable so she can continue her work as a riding teacher. But slow, creeping zooms shake the foundations of this English idyll, and cinematographer Mátyás Erdély keeps the camera at a distance to emphasise the house's cavernous, shadowy rooms. This family is unwelcome everywhere, from their children's new schools, to the cocktail parties where Allison is introduced as Mrs Rory O'Hara and paraded like a trophy. By setting the film in 1986, the year of the Big Bang when the City of London was deregulated leading to the era of "boom and bust", Durkin captures the empty promise of prosperity.

As Rory tells tall tales to his stockbroker colleagues about owning a flat in Mayfair and trips to the National Theatre, unconvincingly covering the fetid scent of new money, Alison cracks under the strain. *The Nest* might chart Rory's inevitable fall, but Law ultimately plays second fiddle to Coon. She seamlessly inhabits this sharp but compassionate woman who teeters on the edge of oblivion, bringing subtlety and pathos to a role that could have – in the wrong hands – bordered on camp. One moment she's a Gothic heroine ("You're all strangers to me right now!" she screams at her children), the next she's swigging wine straight from the bottle and dancing with her eyes closed to The Communards' 'Don't Leave Me This Way'.

The Nest is a curious beast: a study of marital mind games and ill-fated capitalistic greed incarnate. It eschews melodrama in favour of a quieter desperation, helping its chilly, melancholic conclusion to linger in the mind. **LAURA VENNING**

Souad

Directed by **AYTEN AMIN**
Starring **BASSANT AHMED, BASMALA ELGHAIESH, HUSSEIN GHANEM**
Released **27 AUGUST**

ANTICIPATION.
Hopeful for an older, Egyptian Eighth Grade.

4

ENJOYMENT.
Quite an intimate perspective into teen life but emotionally too neutral.

3

IN RETROSPECT.
Such casual, distant treatment of serious issues left me bitter.

2

A phone camera becomes a mirror for self-perception in Ayten Amin's *Souad*, named after its 19-year-old protagonist, played by Bassant Ahmed. Almost a social chameleon, she makes up stories of fiancés and medical schools and fishes for advice from whichever kindly "aunty" is sitting next to her on the bus. Her actual world is smaller. In the Egyptian inner city of Zagazig, she lives at home, silently serving her parents along with her little sister Rabab (Basmala Elghaiesh). She escapes through her phone screen, obsessively scrolling social media and reaching out to this almost unattainable other world. She starts relationships with older men like Ahmed (Hussain Ghanem), who lives a shiny influencer life hours away in the glamorous portside city of Alexandria, sending him a tranche of voice messages and pictures.

In only showing Souad's side of this relationship to begin with, Amin highlights the anxiety that comes without human proximity or the immediacy of a response. Souad's flirting is painful to watch as she sits in the dark, lit by the unnatural blue glow, silently crying. There's irony in her t-shirt emblazoned with 'GIRLS DON'T DRESS FOR GUYS'. Without a soundtrack or voiceover, *Souad* feels voyeuristic as the camera follows its subject intimately, but there is a barrier of understanding, even when we hear her desperate late night messages.

Conversations with her friends introduce the thoughts of other Egyptian teenagers, presenting an intriguing dichotomy between faith and frivolity, from judgements passed on other Instagram profiles to mention of Istikhara, a prayer for seeking answers about the future from God. While the use of shitty mascara, and too-red, too-sticky lip gloss is a relatable experience, one incisive scene shows the girls talking about lightening skin with lemon juice, highlighting the pervasive beauty ideals that indoctrinate them with racism. However, these limited insights fade as Souad's closest friends become stereotypes, like an angel and a demon on each shoulder. One overtly flirting and encouraging, the other more reserved about relationships.

In its second half the film switches to Rabab's perspective as she seeks out Ahmed. There is a realisation that the terrible man on the other side of the phone really is just some guy, as lost as Souad, though old enough to know better. In her debut performance, Basmala Elghaiesh stands out. Despite her youth and unassuming presence, Rabab is as smooth a liar as her sister, and her casual deceptions are startling. She parrots everything from the scolding of her aunt to the pain of her sister, and her confusion bursts out from otherwise reserved dialogue.

Souad interrogates modern Egyptian society with an overly matter-of-fact tone that is only just saved by Elghaiesh's emotive moments as a kid questioning the value of this ephemeral adult world. As someone with relevant first-hand experience of this world and these characters, it all comes across as superficial and sour – without the counterbalance of hope. Though it may feel more revelatory to those navigating this milieu for the first time. **FATIMA SHERIFF**

Rose Plays Julie

Directed by JOE LAWLOR, CHRISTINE MOLLOY
Starring ANN SKELLY, ORLA BRADY, AIDAN GILLEN
Released 17 SEPTEMBER

In life, there are professions available to those who seek them which enable you to administer a lethal injection to a live animal. You prep the needle. You deliver the poison. Then you stand back and watch the animal die. *Rose Plays Julie*, the extraordinary new reflexive drama by Irish filmmakers Joe Lawlor and Christine Molloy, presents a young woman named Rose (Ann Skelly) in the process of becoming a veterinarian, and such a life-or-death procedure is vital to the learning process. It's not just the technical aspects, but the emotional side: being able to coldly and calmly accept that death is the only humane course of action.

The business of putting lame animals to sleep is water off a (dead) duck's back for Rose, but there's the suggestion that her prospective occupation has triggered a desire to set her own affairs in order. Rose discovers she was adopted, and wants to know who her real parents are. She heads to London and cleverly ensnares a popular TV actor named Ellen (Orla Brady) into revealing the details of her birth, which in turn sheds light on why Rose was put up for adoption in the first place by this successful professional who, it transpires, went on to have other children. The story of her procreation is beyond her darkest dreams, and Ellen is forced to excavate the bible-black memories of her deepest soul in order to give Rose the truth she so deserves. The sequence is genuinely harrowing, as well as being harrowingly genuine, in that it reflects the difficulty that comes with unloading repressed traumas that place popular men in the crosshairs.

The popular man in this instance is Aiden Gillen's Peter, who does his own form of excavation as a squeaky clean TV archaeologist. But like Ellen, there's a stark disparity between the person he presents on camera and the persona he presents off it. In some ways, *Rose Plays Julie* is stealthily critical of the screen's ability to allow evil people to hide from reality. Yet it also suggests that performance can allow a person to be anyone they want to be. Ellen's trauma is transferred to Rose and exacerbated by the added element of surprise, and so the daughter decides to invent her own "character" named Julie and, as she did with her mother, infiltrate the life of her estranged father and probe for ways to make him confront the pain he caused her mother.

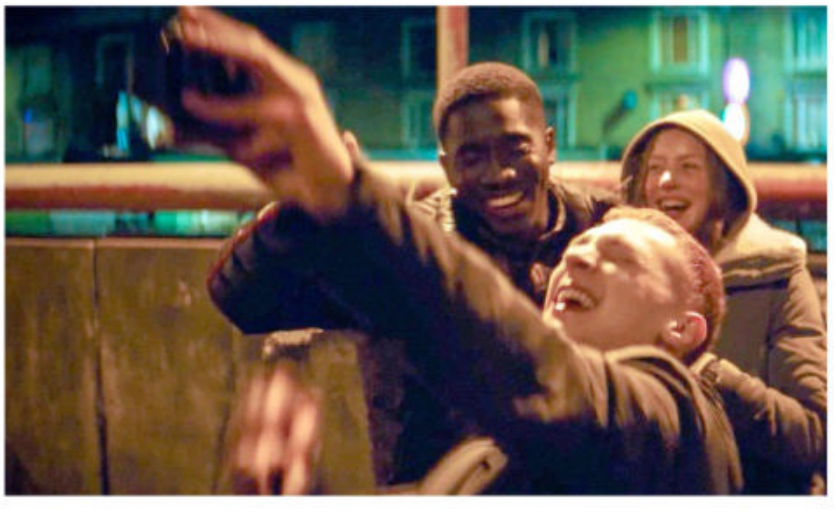
What's great about *Rose Plays Julie* is that it works as a kind of trashy and gleefully contrived revenge thriller, particularly in its more tense second half. But every decision and every moment is loaded with complex ethical dilemmas and difficult questions about how we go about laying our personal demons to rest. We can't just give them a lethal injection and stand and watch as they expire. Or can we? **DAVID JENKINS**

ANTICIPATION. 4
Lawlor and Molloy rarely put a foot wrong, so excited to see this new one.

ENJOYMENT. 4
The pair's most ambitious and provocative film yet.

IN RETROSPECT. 5
Would make a fascinating, ethically thorny double feature with Promising Young Woman.

A Brixton Tale



Directed by **DARRAGH CAREY, BERTRAND DESROCHERS**
Starring **LILY NEWMARK, OLA OREBIYI, JAIME WINSTONE**
Released **17 SEPTEMBER**

ANTICIPATION.
A look at media manipulation and race relations. What a time for this film to arrive.
4

ENJOYMENT.
Not enjoyable in the conventional sense. Leaves you with a feeling that more needed to be said.
3

IN RETROSPECT.
Swiftly paced, but grim in its telling. Certainly worth seeking out.
3

The trim running time of Bertrand Desrochers and Darragh Carey's *A Brixton Tale* means a complicated social drama is delivered while saving a hell of a lot of shoe leather in the process. Wealthy white YouTuber Leah (Lily Newmark) tracks down reserved black youth Benji (Ola Orebiyi) and secures him as the subject of a documentary for her well-connected aunt (Jaime Winstone). A relationship soon forms between the pair. However, Leah's infatuation with filming is as potent as the love she has for Benji. The pair begin a relationship and complications swell from there on in.

There is an anxiety that radiates from this material, which is an intense, British feel-bad movie. The film's themes of race, class and the systems that help cause the divides between them are not only relevant but converge in a brutally honest fashion. Gaze too long into Leah's doe eyes and you can't be sure of whether she comprehends the power of her actions, or if she's oblivious to her status and one of the 21st century's most infamous buzzwords: privilege. It's clear from the get-go that Benji is not the stereotypical "product of his environment" that Leah appears hellbent on presenting him as.

In watching Leah's cosy suburban home – which stands in vast contrast to Benji's inner-city life – the differences between the pair are eventually what draws them closer to each other. Benji is no badman, but his proximity to a certain type of peril excites Leah personally as much as professionally. When he asks why Leah never invites him round to her house, the supposed hidden answer is obvious. In the same way, Benji is referred to as merely a friend among company.

The strength of *A Brixton Tale* lies in the fact that it never sands down its edges. Benji is a good kid. But his background and race make him easy to manipulate and, unfortunately, envisioning him as a typical product of violence and hooliganism is all too easy. His desire to show himself as a roadman becomes critical in the film's latter half. Leah is pretty and bright, but her apparent naivety and youth doesn't excuse her status. Much like Lenny Abrahamson's 2012 bleak drama, *What Richard Did*, *A Brixton Tale* is swift in highlighting how much trouble one can avoid as long as you have the right connections.

A Brixton Tale's weakness lies in some of its eagerness. It's difficult not to feel that 15 minutes of connective tissue has been removed to keep the focus squarely on the committed leads. A sub plot involving mental health feels too tidy and never hits as hard as it should. While supporting characters are given time to shine but not enough to fully breathe. The film may buckle slightly because of this, but it still provides a formidable education in media manipulation and edge. It's certainly worth a look.

LESLIE BYRON PITT

Interview by **RŌGAN GRAHAM** *Illustration by* **ADRIANA BELLET**

Jeymes Samuel

The music producer/singer-songwriter known as The Bullitts slinks into the role of filmmaker with his super fun revisionist western, The Harder They Fall.

Jeymes Samuel's *The Harder They Fall* represents the Old West in a bold and dynamic debut feature that follows Nat Love (Jonathan Majors) as he seeks revenge on Rufus Buck (Idris Elba) and his formidable gang. Co-produced by Shawn Carter and boasting an all-star cast of Regina King, Lakeith Stanfield, Delroy Lindo and Zazie Beetz, here the director talks about his love for the genre and the necessity to reimagine our approach to period cinema.

LWLies: How did the project start? Samuel: The idea for the story came to me about 10 years ago. I shot a proof of concept short film called *They Die by Dawn*, which was my initial foray into the old west. I wrote a few drafts of it, myself and Jay-Z were just working and putting it together. Then in the last stretch I brought in writer Boaz Yakin, he's a friend of mine. He did a revision just to have additional eyes on the structure.

Why a western for your debut feature? Well, I love cinema and I love Old West westerns, but we've been lied to our whole lives. Native Americans weren't circling the wagons of white people – it didn't happen. And to show women characters in positions of weakness and people of color as subservient. Slavery was abolished in the 1860s so there were *decades*-worth of Black people in the Old West. Since I was a kid people would argue with me for years that Black Cowboys didn't exist, so I would do a lot of research on it. Then I just put all the ones I found together like *The Avengers* – the story is fiction but the people existed.

How did you reconciled these depictions with your love for the genre? You fall in love with the aesthetic and you fall in love with the stories, but it's the telling of them that you have a problem with. Black people have a setting in us called 'auto erase', women have it too. Like you watch things and automatically erase the insults as you go. With westerns we'll be acutely aware of how we're being treated in them, just like with most genres. But if we don't watch those movies there'll be hardly any cinema we can watch. That's why in *The Harder They Fall* you don't hear the N-word once

You literally kill it in its tracks. I don't believe there was ever a time where you could just run up and call us a 'bunch of N-words' and we'd willfully accept it. Black people were *en*slaved, not slaves and it's a big difference. And for all the people that were enslaved, there were always revolts, which is why so many of us died! If you're making a period piece, why does it mean we have to be subservient? Those people are unimaginative and just in love with the word and the opportunity to exploit. In my movies there'll be cinematic repercussions.

Could you talk about the soundtrack? I composed the score myself. I wanted to utilize reggae because dub and its origins are really close to Western music. If you listen to Dub at its foundations, it's like a soundtrack. It's already like a score for Westerns [begins to make Dub noises]. The rules are exactly what Ennio Morricone was following with Sergio Leone. It's gully, it's menacing, the two go hand in hand. And then I'll go to Fela Kuti and Afrobeats, to the Fisk Jubilee Singers. I would utilise all of these sounds and genres to create one sonic landscape because they're all Black expression. There's a scene where Wiley Escoe gets beaten down, so I wrote a song styled like an old Negro spiritual called 'Do Unto Others' and when he's lying on the floor, that particular song turns into an Afrobeat version of the theme, *The Harder They Fall* [starts singing 'Wahala they come, Wahala they come']. Wahala is a Nigerian word for drama.

Can you talk a bit about your visual influences and the set design? My set decorator is a man called Martin Whist. I'm in love with pretty much everything this guy does, so it was a joy to work with him. Visually I was inspired by two things: the painter Kadir Nelson – his colour palette informed what I wanted to do with this movie. I didn't really have cinematography references for my mood board. And then the buildings of New Orleans. Hiring someone like Martin was amazing, he just understood the movie. Cause *The Harder They Fall* is a unique experience. Whatever you're doing, obey your crazy. When you have a crazy thought you have it because you can see it, no one else can. Obey your crazy, and it will take you to where you need to go

Candyman

Directed by **NIA DACOSTA**
Starring **YAHYA ABDUL-MATEEN II, TEYONAH PARRIS, TONY TODD**
Released **27 AUGUST**

In Bernard Rose's 1992 film *Candyman*, the title character was played by the towering, velvet-voiced Tony Todd, who used a hooked hand and plenty of gravitas to sear himself into the cultural consciousness. He returns for Nia DaCosta's sequel, which reframes that figure as the victim of a sadistic lynching and the first in a series of Candymen born out of the extremities of Black pain. This film, as well as being faithful to the timeline of the original, serves as a commentary on it, and asks us to re-examine white saviours and Black boogeymen.

Written by DaCosta with Win Rosenfeld and Jordan Peele, *Candyman* has all of the seething racial commentary of *Get Out*, but where that film examined modern liberal white supremacy with plenty of humour, DaCosta goes hard into intergenerational Black trauma, police brutality, the commodification of Black pain and gentrification. It's a lot to pack into its 91-minute runtime, and occasionally the dialogue is weighed down with heavy thesis, but Yahya Abdul-Mateen II, Teyonah Parris and the always-excellent Colman Domingo strike a balance between characterisation and IDEAS. Abdul Mateen is particularly impressive, both as a glistening sculpture of a man who matches Todd's presence, and as a performer who unravels with committed physicality.

There are so many interesting choices that DaCosta makes throughout. She frames towers, skylines and corridors with surreal disconnection that creates an urban topography as unnerving as The Overlook Hotel. Unexpected perspectives and slow zooms sit alongside a low abstracted score with a nauseating use of bass. Many of the scenes of violence are entirely fixed on a single perspective or from a disquieting distance, recreating the brutal brilliance of *Let The Right One In*'s famous swimming pool massacre. This, combined with shadow-puppet flashbacks, some impressively nasty body horror and thrilling use of mirrors, creates a far stranger and more fascinating film than expected.

Much has been debated about what the Black Gaze versus the White Gaze means and never has it been more clearly laid out than in this sequel, where white women innacurately explain the Black community's problems to them and DaCosta asks us to question who gets to be a monster and who gets to be a white (Black) knight riding in to save the day. While the film never seems to settle on Candyman's agency and a few interpersonal relationships could have done with more than a single scene, this is still a searing and exceptional piece of work. DaCosta's love of the genre and its potential are clear and hers is possibly the most exciting Black horror voice since Peele. Let's hope that after the time spent in the MCU we see more of her riveting nightmares. **LEILA LATIF**

ANTICIPATION. 4
DaCosta's horror chops are unproven but the shadow puppet trailer was beautiful.

ENJOYMENT. 4
No sequel has done more for the Black gaze or for scary stuff in mirrors.

IN RETROSPECT. 4
D*istinguishes DaCosta as a visionary to be reckoned with.*

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Paris Calligrammes

Directed by **ULRIKE OTTINGER**
Starring **ULRIKE OTTINGER, JENNY AGUTTER, FANNY ARDANT**
Released **27 AUGUST**

ANTICIPATION. 3
The romance of 1960s Paris feels like well-covered ground at this point.

ENJOYMENT. 4
A charming and eccentric personal tour down down Ulrike Ottinger's own memory lane.

IN RETROSPECT. 3
Fans of Ottinger may find more to take from this than others but its warmth is undeniable.

"How can someone convert their experiences into art?" asks veteran German filmmaker Ulrike Ottinger at the beginning of her latest documentary, *Paris Calligrammes*. Taking the calligram – a piece of text arranged to look like a related image – as inspiration, Ottinger builds an ode to Paris from her memories of the city's 1960s vivacity and its influence on her work.

Archival footage of Ottinger's favourite haunts sits alongside present-day images of Paris' artistic quarters, marking the movement and change of the city over the last several decades with the eye of a *flâneuse*. Each location is granted its own chapter in the film, signified by handwritten title texts in striking yellow and Yves Klein blue, as the filmmaker-turned-tour guide welcomes the viewer into the antiquarian bookstore and political hangout Librairie Calligrammes, then artist Johnny Friedlaender's studio, before stopping for lunch at Les Deux Magots. This is a creative and flourishing Paris, but also Paris during the strife of the Algerian War, Paris on the brink of civil unrest in 1968.

As much as the film is Ottinger's attempt to reflect on a formative place and time in her career, it is also a bold act of positioning oneself in a specific history, alongside male peers and contemporaries, without waiting for someone else to. Ottinger's personal history is resigned to background: at the fore is everything else that was going on in the city around her, everything that came to shape her work through a kind of creative and political osmosis. This is effective on one hand as it allows Ottinger to blend into the scene, creating no real separation between her and the Paris she was occupying. But on the other, it forces the film into an objectivity that denies us further insight into Ottinger's artistic process and her own reflections on her experience.

Still, the charm and ease with which Ottinger regales the viewer with tales of the city in the 1960s is undeniably attractive, although the film does well to avoid a 'La Vie en Rose'-tinted view of Paris and its aura. In fact, Édith Piaf's other hit, 'Non, je ne regrette rien,' serves an important function at the end of the film when Ottinger reminds us that Piaf dedicated the song to the French Foreign Legion during the Algerian War. The filmmaker also dedicates a chapter of the film to the Palais de la Porte Dorée, the home of the Paris Colonial Exposition in 1931 and now the National Museum of the History of Immigration. Not willing to overlook the country's colonial past and its role in many of the later events discussed in the film, Ottinger features the space and its relics with a matter-of-fact, observational eye, yet this is the only chapter where it begins to feel as though Ottinger is uncertain of her voice. A later scene at the city's oldest auction house where a collection of items from the last imperial family of Vietnam is being sold readdresses this slightly. "Now the offspring of this history," she says, "the French, Vietnamese and Africans are sitting here selling memories or buying them back." **CAITLIN QUINLAN**

"A rich cinematic journey into the art of seeing"
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Words by **CAITLIN QUINLAN** *Illustration by* **ADRIANA BELLET**

Ulrike Ottinger

In celebration of her new doc Paris Calligrammes*, we look back at the storied and ecclectic career of this German maestro.*

At the beginning of her latest film *Paris Calligrammes*, German filmmaker Ulrike Ottinger quotes a line from Marcel Carné's 1940s romantic drama *Les Enfants du Paradis*. "A spectacle for those who don't keep their eyes in their pockets," Ottinger recites. "I never kept my eyes in my pockets," she adds.

Always watching, always absorbing the world around her, Ottinger embraces pure spectacle. Viewing her films, too, is to defy the possibility of ever keeping your own eyes in your pockets. There is the wacky visual splendour that fills much of her work, particularly the films made early in her career as part of the New German Cinema movement in the 1970s. But there is also the observational intrigue of her documentaries. Her catalogue is one to marvel at for its sheer volume – she has nearly 20 feature films to her name, including a nearly five-hour long portrait of a group of exiles in Shanghai, and a 12-hour document of a Bering Sea voyage.

Born in Konstanz, Germany in 1942 to a journalist mother and a painter father, Ottinger had interests in painting and photography from a young age. From 1962 until 1969, as documented in *Paris Calligrammes*, she worked as an independent artist in Paris and learned new techniques and modes of thinking from the circle of French Surrealists and intellectuals around her, be it Claude Lévi-Strauss, Jean Genet or Jean-Paul Sartre. On her return to Germany in the early '70s she began making films – her first, *Laocoon & Sons*, is a loose adaptation of Virginia Woolf's novel 'Orlando' which she would go on to develop further in perhaps her most celebrated work, 1981's *Freak Orlando*.

Woolf's story of a gender-shifting, time-travelling poet who explores the history of the English literary world had a radical, liberatory appeal, allowing for a flamboyant translation into Ottinger's film. Across five chapters, Orlando, in several forms, travels from a department store in "Freak City" across industrial wastelands, to the Middle Ages and back with the help of an ever-present travelling circus sideshow. *Freak Orlando* is a dazzlingly camp and outlandish film, costumed to the nines and with bold performances from Magdalena Montezuma and Delphine Seyrig, both of whom became regulars in Ottinger's work.

The film marked the middle of what has come to be known as Ottinger's "Berlin Trilogy", preceded by *Ticket of No Return* (1979), a hazy portrait of drunken escapades and women under scrutiny in the city, and followed by *Dorian Gray in the Mirror of the Yellow Press* (1984), in which an international newspaper create their own Dorian Gray for nefarious purposes. These films don't follow succinct narratives as such, instead aiming to revel in a lively showcase of history from a position of feminine liberation and self-expression. They reject traditional categorisation and definition; even as an openly lesbian filmmaker, Ottinger did not want her films labelled (and therefore confined) as "queer". As Michael Koresky writes for *Film Comment*, "Her frames, which can contain pleasure and horror, beauty and grotesquerie in equal measure, seem to exist out of time, condensing and collapsing eras, even centuries, into a kind of free-floating operatic excess."

Ottinger's documentary work is more explicitly ethnographic, studying the cultures and communities of places far-removed from her experiences yet nonetheless inviting. Sam Bodrojan for Metrograph explains that "Ulrike's cinematic travelogue is European, postwar, Jewish, and queer. It is specific, not monolithic, and it touches other cultures gingerly, with grace, love, and attention. The length and patience of her ethnography settles as an openness, an expression of respect and mutual justice." These films, whether documenting the rituals of Korean society or the history of a Viennese amusement park, are curious and interrogative, seeking out both the spectacle and the uglier truths of the past.

It is perhaps her wide-ranging style and rejection of neat classification in her work that has meant Ottinger has not received the same kind of attention as her peers, whether fellow female auteurs like Agnès Varda or Chantal Akerman, or her male contemporaries in Germany like Werner Herzog and Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Her fiction films are unabashedly avant-garde and theatrical, her documentaries happily take their time; both meander through history, following every possible avenue for discovery

Copilot

Directed by **ANNE ZOHRA BERRACHED**
Starring **CANAN KIR, ROGER AZAR, DARINA AL JOUNDI**
Released **10 SEPTEMBER**

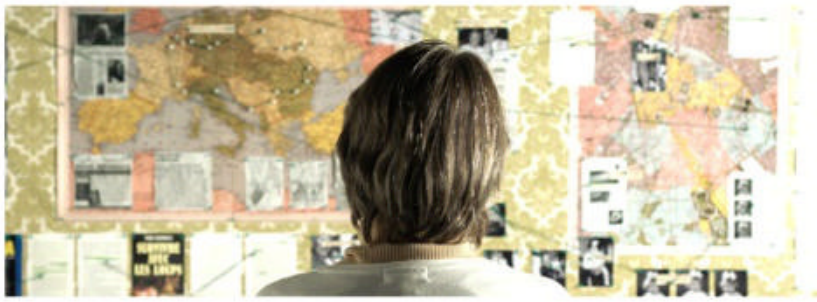
Set in Hamburg in the mid-'90s over the course of five years, Anne Zohra Berrached's *Copilot* is a fictionalised account of the tumultuous relationship between bright Turkish science student Asli (Canan Kir) and the charismatic and confident Saeed (Roger Azar) from Lebanon, whose dream is to become a pilot. The focus of the film lies in Asli's perseverance: her true and subjective experience; her visceral outbursts and moments of suppressing her emotions. The camera's intimacy breaks with the film's realism through various poetic and dreamlike devices used to portray Asli's inner conflict. Moving to a flat in a red light district, a constant and invasive blue-red light glaringly flashes into her room, enhancing her ever increasing restlessness. The cinematography evokes an emotional recreation of the era, with the film's poetic sequences being enriched by Evgueni and Sacha Galperine's captivating score.

By the third year of their relationship, Saeed spends more and more time with his Arab friends discussing what's considered *haram* (forbidden) and *makruh* (disapproved), before going off to Yemen for a few months. His response to, "Why are you off to Yemen?", being a mere and unsatisfactory, "Trust me". At this point, as a viewer, you're frustrated. You want to urge Asli to demand answers, to insist on sufficient explanations, to ask questions, to emancipate herself from this unfair emotional turmoil, even if it comes at a cost. **MARINA ASHIOTI**

ANTICIPATION
Arrives on these shores on the back of an impressive festival run.
3

ENJOYMENT
Canan Kir gives a beautiful performance within a well-crafted narrative of impending loss.
4

IN RETROSPECT
An exploration of a woman's emotional endurance which feels lyrical.
4



Misha and the Wolves

Directed by **SAM HOBKINSON**
Released **3 SEPTEMBER**

In 1997, an extraordinary memoir was published detailing the experiences of a Holocaust survivor who was raised by a pack of wolves. The book was a best-seller in France and Italy, and was even optioned by Disney to be adapted into a feature. There was just one problem: none of it was true. It would be over 20 years before Misha Defonseca (real name Monique de Wael) admitted her lie, but some had suspected as much for years – including Jane Daniel, the publisher she had sued over the book's distribution and royalties. Sam Hobkinson's documentary tracks the story across decades, delving into the reality that de Wael obscured, and how she fabricated a tale that captured the imagination of readers around the world.

Interviews form the majority of the film, chiefly with Daniel and Belgian genealogist Evelyne Haendel, whose parents were killed in the Holocaust. The pair turned amateur detectives to investigate the discrepancies in Misha's story. Their persistence and meticulous research is presented in fascinating detail, while Hobkinson imbues the film with a fairytale-like quality which mimics the fantastical nature of its source material. The phenomenon of writers who fabricate events in order to sell books persists to this day but the truth is often stranger than fiction, and this tale of deception is told with artistic confidence and explores not only what drove de Wael to lie, but why it was so easy for people to believe her. **HANNAH STONG**

ANTICIPATION
Interesting premise but potential for lacklustre execution.
3

ENJOYMENT
A compelling story, well-researched and sensitively told.
4

IN RETROSPECT
Not particularly memorable, but highly immersive in the moment.
3

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Sweetheart

Directed by **MARLEY MORRISON**
Starring **NELL BARLOW, JO HARTLEY, ELLA-RAE SMITH**
Released **24 SEPTEMBER**

What makes a good gay film? We're so used to the predictabilty of mainstream queer cinema featuring that tired sub-genre of the lesbian period drama (two more white women in petticoats yearning to hold hands by the beach – they might kiss!). Or, the abundance of more contemporary, over-exaggerated interpretations of campy gay men covered in glitter (who also do drag). Or, at worst, the tired yet long-standing 'bury your gays' pop culture trope, which has LGBTQ+ characters in film and TV dying or having unhappy endings at a disproportionate rate – a symptom of sensationalising queer trauma.

Marley Morrison's feature writing and directorial debut follows none of those clichés. *Sweetheart* marks an authentic account of the murky, counterintuitive waters of the queer experience and eros in adolescence, following the 17-year-old AJ (Nell Barlow) as she pines for a space of independence and self-expression. AJ is dragged to a tacky British seaside resort for a family holiday, complete with the type of amateur entertainment acts and sunburnt British holidaymakers to turn a teenager's worst nightmare into a reality. Bored and socially awkward, in her signature red aviator sunglasses, bucket hat and baggy clothes, AJ's narration can be annoying/jarring at times, but it's hard not to root for her.

Morrison isn't interested in adding yet another coming out story to to the queer canon and instead explores AJ's endeavour to be the fully realised version of her queer self. She becomes captivated by the dreamy figure of Isla (Ella-Rae Smith), a flirty yet impulsive 18-year-old lifeguard who works at the resort. Moments of discomfort, tenderness and eroticism become subject to predictability, with AJ's angst-filled outbursts being a staple of the teen 'dramedy' genre.

Isla tells AJ: "It's the best thing about being on holiday, right? You get to be whoever you want to be". The chemistry between the two girls is palpable, and it's refreshing to see a lesbian coming-of-age story that gives more of a focus to the characters' intricacies and personal battles, rather than any overarching sexual tension. If Morrison strays from clichés, she certainly manages to capture the awkward dynamics of existing as a queer person in a heteronormative environment. Although we know that AJ doesn't feel like she belongs, there's no controversy surrounding her sexuality.

Sweetheart doesn't rely on traumatic storylines and narratives of victimhood to make its audience care about AJ. Her journey isn't straightforward in any way, but it's instead relevant and reflective of the queer Gen-Z experience. Sometimes there is no resolution. Things stay messy, and that's okay. **MARINA ASHIOTI**

ANTICIPATION. 3
This festival crowd-pleaser sounds charmingly sweet.

ENJOYMENT. 4
Slow-paced at times, the coming-of-age, falling in love narrative feels a bit predictable.

IN RETROSPECT. 4
Well-rounded characters, with a heavy dose of huffy teenage angst.

Interview by **JOSH SLATER-WILLIAMS** *Illustration by* **ADRIANA BELLET**

Marley Morrison

This first-time filmmaker discusses the making of her charming queer love story, Sweetheart.

Marley Morrison's debut feature *Sweetheart* follows AJ (Nell Barlow), a socially awkward, recently out teenage lesbian. Dragged to a coastal holiday park by her mother (Jo Hartley), ahead of her pregnant older sister's (Sophia Di Martino) due date, AJ becomes smitten with park lifeguard Isla (Ella-Rae Smith).

LWLies: Why did you want to get into feature films? Morrison: It was something I never really imagined I would be able to do, purely because of my background and level of experience. Growing up, film school seemed like something that was just completely not what people where I'm from do. It felt pretty far away for me. It started with making music videos with one of my friends who was a rapper and then it just snowballed from there into more narrative shorts.

I grew up in a little town that didn't really have much access to anything, and I ended up coming to London when I was a teenager to escape my home town. And then being in London, it's a lot to do with class and access to opportunities. Over the past couple of years, there's been a push to get more working-class filmmakers out there. And with the rise of mobile phones and how good they are at capturing video, I think that's also helped. But when I was 17 and in London, I had a little DV cam. We were just doing what we could with the facilities we had.

What do you view as the major cultural differences between when you experienced a British queer teenagehood and now? When I was younger, it wasn't cool. It wasn't trendy. It was dangerous and isolating. Queer visibility has just changed massively. It's a great thing that young people don't have to go through a lot of what we had to, and people older than myself. There's also the social media element, which means that young people can see other people like themselves. Because when you grow up in the '90s and early '00s and you don't have access to see a hundred people that think or look exactly the same as you, it does feel very isolating.

That's a lot different. And that's probably why I wanted to write a film not about somebody coming out, because it felt more current to talk about what happens next. I didn't want to make a coming out film. I didn't want to make a film that was rooted in any kind of trauma. Times have changed for young people, which is great, so let's show an uplifting story and talk about the funny, nuanced relationships that people have once somebody's come out.

I feel very lucky to be in a position to write a story that centres a young lesbian. We see a lot of films dealing with LGBTQ+ issues that are sometimes rooted in trauma, but also that don't centre young lesbians. And that was super important for me, that I see somebody that looks like me on screen. Hopefully, the next generation of young queer girls and boys can see somebody that reflects them in some way.

What is it about British holiday parks that are such catalysts for compelling stories of youth? They're really interesting places. A majority of working-class British people would have gone to a holiday park at one point in their life. They're timeless and exist in this space that doesn't really change that much. The music is the same wherever you go

Pig

Directed by **MICHAEL SARNOSKI**
Starring **NICOLAS CAGE, ALEX WOLFF, ADAM ARKIN**
Released **20 AUGUST**

Somewhere in the vast woodland outside Portland, Oregon, Robin (Nicolas Cage) and his pig live a simple life. Their days are spent foraging for prized truffles in the forest. Evenings bring the respite of a warm hearth and home-cooked mushroom tart. Occasional visits from young buck city slicker Amir (Alex Wolff) to trade the fruits of their labour for essential supplies are a necessary inconvenience. Their rural idyll is shattered when intruders arrive in the night, assaulting Robin and abducting his porcine partner. When he regains consciousness, covered in blood, he limps toward civilisation (and the remnants of the person he used to be) in search of his attackers.

This outline of Michael Sarnoski's debut might appear to share similarities with revenge flicks such as *Taken* or *John Wick*, and the casting of Nicolas Cage in the central role might hint at an inevitable on-screen freakout, but *Pig* defies expectations at every turn, creating a moving narrative about grief, memory and the value of food to connect us to a person or a place.

As Robin and a reluctant Amir travel through Portland searching for the missing pig, details about Robin's former life as a renowned figure in the city's restaurant scene emerge. The reasons for his self-imposed isolation, as well as Amir's cocksure overcompensation, unfurl slowly, creating an investment in these characters so lovingly brought to life by Cage and Wolff. Their rapport as an odd couple in the great cinematic tradition is exemplary, but it's the way they imbue their characters with a natural tenderness that solidifies them as two stand-outs of the year. It's Cage's most thoughtful and restrained performance in a long time, exhibiting a gentleness we don't often get to see.

There are revelations, tears, and some exquisite shots of food. Sarnoski's reverence for the natural world and appreciation of a meal made with love and care evokes Kelly Reichardt's *First Cow*, while Alexis Grapsas and Philip Klein's sublime score adds a melancholy, almost austere quality to the soundscape. There's a visceral edge to *Pig* and Patrick Scola's cinematography imbues an ethereal, folktale quality: from the sticky squelch of blood on a hardwood floor to the dim glow of a bakery counter at dawn.

Robin and Amir share the weight of familial fracture and bond over their respective scars. It becomes evident that sometimes the only way out of anguish is through confronting the trauma of the past head-on. In fact, *Pig* calls to mind the lyrics of David Byrne: "I'm just an animal looking for a home / share the same space for a minute or two." There's beauty in even the most fleeting moments (a beautiful meal, cooked with care; a person you loved, no longer around) and that's worth savouring in a world as cruel as ours. **HANNAH STRONG**

ANTICIPATION. 4
There's a strong buzz from the US release.

ENJOYMENT. 4
Rich, poignant filmmaking anchored by two magnetic leads.

IN RETROSPECT. 4
An outstanding debut. Pair with wine and someone you love.

The Story of Looking

Directed by **MARK COUSINS**
Starring **MARK COUSINS**

Released **17 SEPTEMBER**

ANTICIPATION.
Mark Cousins can sometimes be a tad po-faced but this lockdown project is intriguing. 3

ENJOYMENT.
Unexpectedly zippy for a Cousins' joint, and the full frontal nudity was a surprise. 3

IN RETROSPECT.
It's no The Story of Film*, but there are some genuinely powerful moments here.* 3

A decade on from his 15-hour magnum opus, *The Story of Film* comes another chapter in the life and interests of critic-turned-filmmaker Mark Cousins. *The Story of Looking*, is expanded from his 2017 book of the same name, yet this time the director limits himself to 90 minutes and adopts a more personal perspective.

Written, directed and shot by Cousins during lockdown, *The Story of Looking* is immediate in its intimacy. It opens with Cousins in bed watching an interview with Ray Charles on his phone. While discussing his relationship with his blindness, Charles explains that he can treasure certain things that he's only seen once, and that there are plenty of terrible sights he's glad to have never seen. Alongside these statements as a spark of inspiration, Cousins reveals that he has developed a severe cataract to be surgically removed the following day. As someone obsessed with the act of looking, he is forced to grapple with what vision really means.

Woven from footage of Cousins' own work as a documentary director, fragments of the films that have inspired him and a handheld visual diary of the day prior to his surgery, *The Story of Looking* is scattershot but occasionally profound. Cousins loosely focuses on the stages of vision that develop as we grow, from the blurry world that a newborn baby sees to the agony of scrutinising your own reflection as a teenager. But what unravels is more of a stream of consciousness with his trademark meditative voiceover than a comprehensive study of the subject of looking.

Touching on colour's place within memory, light as the focus of worship and wonder, voyeurism and exhibitionism, the scope is wide but ultimately not especially deep. Most arresting is Cousins' decision to show the eye surgery itself in enormous, unavoidable close-up. The image of the blade entering his eyeball is simultaneously repulsive and fascinating, a clear challenge both to watch and resist looking away from.

In a recent essay for *Harper's Bazaar*, Martin Scorsese bemoaned the term 'content' being used to describe any and every form of visual media, flattening a David Lean film so it's barely distinguishable from a cat video. What does looking mean today when our eyes are more bombarded with 'content' than ever? Though he touches on selfies as the modern self-portrait, Cousins isn't especially concerned with the impact of the internet on visual culture. This is clearly not so much *the* story of looking but *his* story of looking.

In the film's most moving sequence Cousins reads tweets from his followers about their 'looking lives', from what it means to see and be seen by a loved one, to the memories of a teacher letting their students stare out of the window at the banal but beautiful outside world. Perhaps after months of staring at the same few walls and only seeing loved ones through a screen, a lightweight but sometimes touching ode to the wonder of looking is enough.

LAURA VENNING

Wildland

Directed by **JEANETTE NORDAHL**
Starring **SANDRA GULDBERG KAMPP, SIDSE BABETT KNUDSEN, JOACHIM FJELSTRUP**
Released **13 AUGUST**

ANTICIPATION.
A Danish crime drama from an unknown director might go unnoticed.

2

ENJOYMENT.
Never a dull moment. César-winning Sidse Babett Knudsen is a stand out.

4

IN RETROSPECT.
Surprisingly moving, Wildland *places director Nordahl as one to watch.*

4

As the old saying goes, don't look a gift horse in the mouth. When 17-year-old recently orphaned Ida (Sandra Guldberg Kampp) is sent to live with what seems to be a loving cluster of her extended family, the comfort of her new predicament makes it easy to turn a blind eye to an ever-growing series of red flags.

Having lost her mother in a car accident shortly before turning 18, Ida was given no other choice but to move in with her closest family member – in this case, her estranged aunt Bodil (Sidse Babett Knudsen). The matriarch is always impeccably polished, her presence in a room never not felt. She spoils and coddles all of her three sons, placing soft kisses on their adult lips and lovingly buttering their sandwiches. Her eyes, however, shine brighter for David (Elliott Crosset Hove), the darling, sensitive middle child.

Jeanette Nordahl's directorial debut cleverly unveils the family's idiosyncrasies through the ins and outs of their drug trafficking business. Bodil's house functions according to Michael Corleone's infamous "don't ever take sides with anyone against the family" rules – their inner circle is held firmly by the shackles of loyalty. Yet, what the doting mother believes to be love translates into a suffocating grasp – the tighter she holds, the more agonising the lack of air.

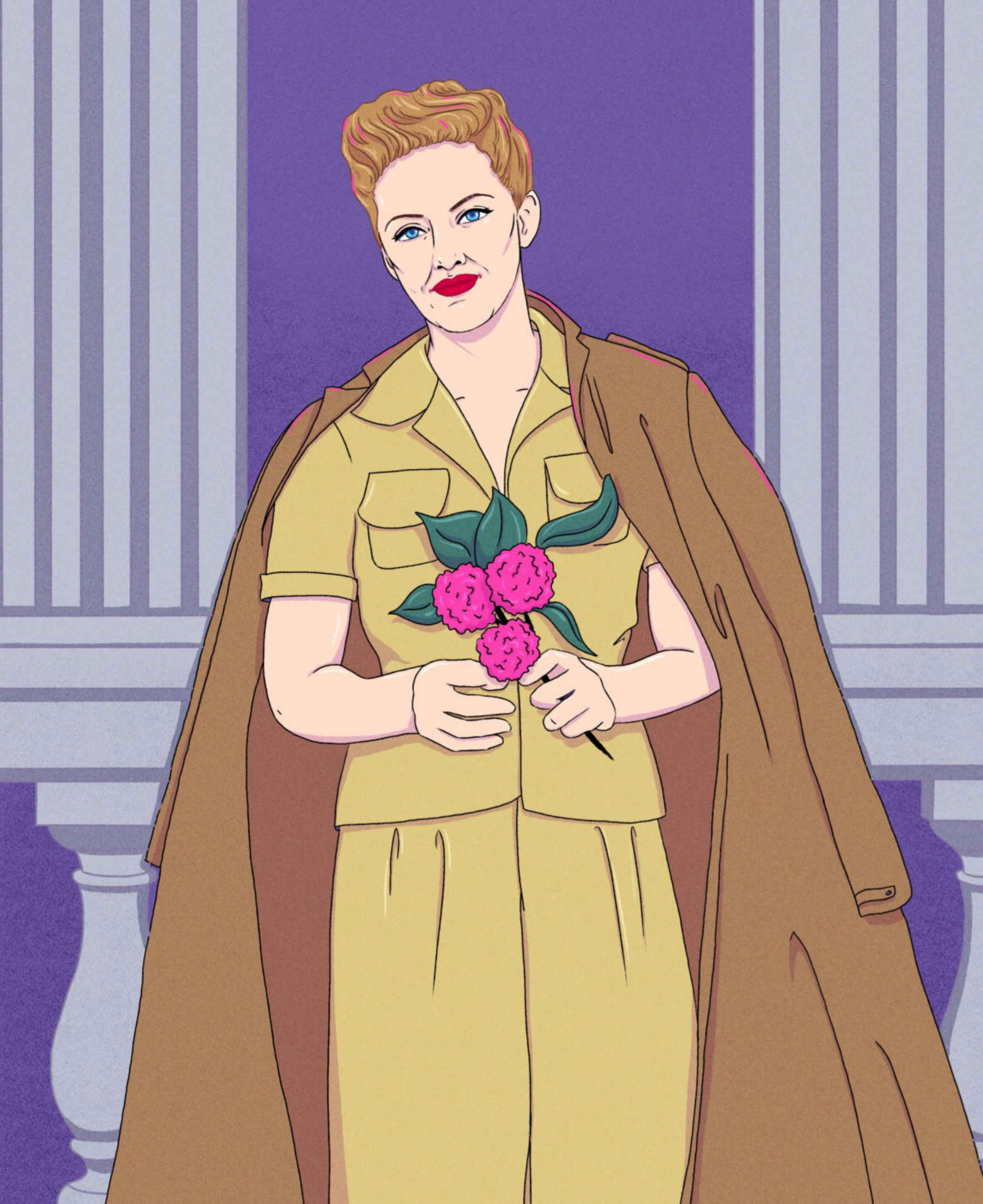
It is precisely this sense of claustrophobia that enhances the film's portrait of a world that runs on deathless cycles. Here, there is no illusion of a possible escape. Addiction feeds into coin that feeds into danger that feeds into fear that feeds into addiction, and Ida is yet another cog in the machine, tragically trapped in the netherworld that doomed her mother – an herself.

Paradoxically, as the brood's operation becomes more violent, their domestic routine becomes more tender. Blood is wiped from hands just in time to clap happy birthday, and words – regardless of their weight – are never hushed. As well, kinship equals undiminished trust as Nordahl builds on the idea that imposed closeness only aids a pounding, guttural need to run.

Ida's only refuge from this maddening plight is through the throbbing beats of electronic music, as nightclubs provide an easy shot of blissful sweat-induced freedom. The rare moments she finds herself away from the clan, on the other hand, are filled with a deafening cacophony of static – an unsilenceable reminder that, no matter how hard she pulls, the cuffs won't loosen. Concurrently, the teen navigates the archetypal woes of adolescence, hesitantly exploring her clouded sexuality while growing ever-aware of the chauvinistic minefield women are made to walk through.

"For some people, things go wrong before they even begin", Ida painfully ponders, summarising Nordahl's enthralling exploration of doomed fates as it draws to its striking conclusion. The words are only fitting, as *Wildland* stands as a bleak reminder that, to some, hope is nothing but a losing game.

RAFA SALES ROSS



Words by **SOMA GHOSH** *Illustration by* **ADRIANA BELLET**

Nasty Canary: Bette Davis

Exploring the latent queer appeal of the Hollywood grande dame ahead of a full retrospective at London's BFI Southbank.

Let's make, as she might say, a "cry for the genuine". Those famous eyes were not, precisely speaking, beautiful. Sardonic, agonised, coldly febrile, they strain, more like a parakeet's than the "moulting canary" of her character, Charlotte Vale, in *Now, Voyager,* the new restoration at the heart of a Bette Davis retrospective at London's BFI Southbank through August and September.

Charlotte is the "late life" daughter of a tyrannical Boston matriarch. Having sexually transgressed as a youngster, she plays her allotted role of "spinster aunt", smoking secretly and carving ivory boxes that hint at her erotic repression – until a nervous breakdown smashes this canary's cage. She voyages to South America by way of recovery, sheds her stupendous caterpillar eyebrows (deserving an acting credit in themselves) and masquerades, via a borrowed cabin, as a chic socialite. Amid sunlit sea foam, desert mountains and jungle, Charlotte embarks on an affair with Jerry (Paul Henreid), a sensitive, married man.

Director Irving Rapper's fragrant melodrama is wrought from laughably crass Freudian psychology. Nonetheless, it epitomises the outsider woman hatched by Davis, prickly and passionate, who unexpectedly thrust a queer riposte to Hollywood's heteronormative model of female pleasers expected, as Davis wrote in her memoir, 'The Lonely Life', to play "Miss Fourth July and Little Miss Clothes Horse". Unmarried and burning for illicit freedom, Charlotte Vale embodies the nasty canary of alternative femininity.

The film lobbies, shockingly, for adultery: the lovers' two cigarettes lit in Jerry's mouth; two bodies burning as one. Jerry flinches from Charlotte's proposed final union, founded on closeted sexuality. He brands himself "a cad", but Charlotte pleads, "What's the feminine for your word? That's what I am." There is no respectable feminine word. *Now Voyager*'s famous lines, "Don't let's ask for the moon. We have the stars," reject monogamy, hinting at a glittering proliferation of ways to burn. Such roles explain, perhaps, why Davis, an adamant heterosexual, boasts a sizable LGBTQ+ fanbase. As drag performer Peaches Christ annunciates, in the 2009 documentary *Queer Icon, The Cult of Bette Davis*: "There's a collective understanding that she is God." Unlike her bisexual peers Joan Crawford and Marlene Dietrich, Davis neither financially nor politically supported queer communities. Speaking to *The Advocate* in the '70s, Davis' stereotype of gay men reveals her fusty, upper crust New England mindset: "A more artistic, appreciative group of people for the arts does not exist."

But her nasty canaries rattle the heteronormative cage, readily 'passing' as another version of themselves (in 1964's *Dead Ringer*, as a second Bette Davis). They build queerish nests from Waspish strands of staff, friends, adopted children and ex-lovers. In 1941's *The Great Lie*, rancher Maggie shacks up with her husband's ex to raise his child by another woman. In her films about star-making – *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?*, *The Star* and *All About Eve* – Davis pecks into the psychology of everyone playing female in society.

Also showing at the BFI is her lauded but, for me, stodgy 1934 bildungsroman, *Of Human Bondage*. Decrying her first two years of filmmaking at Warner Bros. in her memoirs, as "one colourless glob", Davis seized on a role, at rival studio RKO, rejected by other actresses as too unlikeable. Mildred, a callous gold-digging waitress, droopy of eye and morals, with an abysmal Cockney accent, sinks Davis' sizzle. She seemed set for an Oscar, until Warners sent memos to their personnel to not vote for her.

She shot to England, breaking her contract. Her ensuing legal battle with WB played out in a British court bursting with transatlantic press, and it smashed the reputation of the studio. She lost, but was ceded so much artistic control due to her refusal to tolerate mediocre scripts, that she became known as "the fourth Warner Brother". She returned to play in *Marked Woman*, a satisfyingly twisty courtroom thriller, opposite Humphrey Bogart. Mary is a hostess at a club taken over by racketeers, who agrees to be framed for a murder by her mobster boss. Davis' manner of smoking, elegantly pugilistic, tells us that Mary, who 'passes' to her family as a shop model, is in control of her sex work. Trapped by Bogart, Davis resists the clichéd histrionics of the stereotypical 'fallen women'. The script awards Bogart the upper hand but, in defending her fellow fag-end songbirds, Davis punctures his sentitious cant with cut-glass insolence.

Petite, she bestrides the screen, magnifying her gestures, wings awry. Offscreen, the self-fashioning continued. While travelling, each set of knickers and stockings were bagged in monogrammed red silk. When *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* director, Michael Curtiz, trimmed the width of the queen's hoops to suit his framing, Davis had another, historically accurate wardrobe made secretly – a literal closeting – for her poignantly obdurate Elizabeth. She professes in her memoirs, "I'm larger than life" – if so, it was by design.

She can harden into camp, as in the heavy-handed, if riveting psychological horror by Robert Aldrich, *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* from 1962. Legendary rivals Joan Crawford and Davis escaped from relative career stagnation to portray two sisters, actors, one's fame having long eclipsed the other's. Idolised by many queer fans, the film exposes the psychological cost of being not only an actor but a woman. Latin-eyed, saintly martyr, Crawford, and sadistic Davis emerge as two equally befouled aspects of the caged feminine. Puppets, dolls and ventriloquism pile high the signifiers, and it's hard not to laugh when Davis impersonates Crawford's actressy mellifluousness. Gammy and clownish, Davis unmasks the grotesquerie of Baby Jane and of Bette Davis, the star. But her freak show risks cartoonishness, however deliberately.

By contrast, playing horse-mad Judith Traherne, in 1939's *Dark Victory*, Davis is heart-racingly complex. Judith is another woman sickened by performance – in this case, of her own privileged gaiety. A diagnosis of terminal brain cancer by a brilliant, and swiftly amorous doctor (George Brent), frees Judith to really live, though her sickness is closeted in a queerish triangle with her man and her companion Anne, groomed to take over Judith's role. In one sequence, Davis' birdlike eyes swoop from bridal ecstasy to drunken promiscuity and then to bashful shame. Judith finally performs a meaningful death: a decorous, New England Pietà, with a reverential subordinate turning down her sheets. The ultimate display of classy femininity is to pretend death doesn't hurt.

Jezebel, also released in 1939, rips such pretence to shreds. Set during the Yellow Fever epidemic of 1853, it's the standout film of the BFI season, as heady as a rotten gardenia. Julie is the nastiest, silkiest of Bette's canaries (her girlish sexiness skitted in Baby Jane's hideous blonde ringlets). She flouts the Southern heteronormative demand that she "flutter around in white," while doing just that, her eyes glossy as hormone-stimulating moons. Davis' knowingness of Julie's gender performance makes her frivolity a grimly human watch.

William Wyler (*The Letter*, *Little Foxes*) ironises every trope of Southern romance, filling ballrooms with shame and moonlit wisteria with Yellow Fever-spreading mosquitos. Julie, obsessed with winning back her fiancé, Pres (Henry Fonda), manipulates men into murderous duels. The Yellow Fever is upon them, but she sits in a white debutante's gown on her veranda, clouds of slave children around her, whooping up Black hymnals like a death charm – the sweating picture of fetid privilege.

Joseph Mankiewicz's *All About Eve* critiques the performance of womanhood through an aging theatre star, Margo Channing. In one *mis en abyme*, Davis, as Channing, stands, furiously drunk, in an Edith Head panelled satin gown, before a portrait of herself in similar pose and garb: flaunting her precarious self-making. Margo, resolutely unmarried, presides over a queerish roost of co-workers and friends. Davis is magnificently ballsy, heartily disparaging Margo's sexual appeal ("I'm a junkyard."). Terrified of being usurped by her young protégée, Eve, she must learn to quit her performance as 'Margo Channing' and learn to be "feminine and helpless". Mankiewicz's epigrammatic barbs about acting are priceless, but it's Davis, hurling her sagging gullet and crumpled velvet against Anne Baxter's tight-budded, intentful Eve, who gives aging female flesh an unprecedented currency that's rarely been matched since.

As for canaries, well, Baby Jane serves her sister's pet bird for lunch. And if Davis' son screamed to kiss the family's parakeet, the bird was removed. In her memoirs, Davis describes herself queerly morphing from thoroughbred to "little brown wren" to "peacock". Bette Davis can't be contained in a single metaphor. But in these performances, sifting through the droppings on the floor of gender's gilded cage, she mercilessly severs feminine attachment to beauty, youth and niceness

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The River

Directed by JEAN RENOIR
Starring PATRICIA WALTERS, ARTHUR SHIELDS, SUPROVA MUKERJEE

Blu-ray/DVD | *Released* **24 AUGUST**

Simply put, Jean Renoir's rhapsodic 1951 adaptation of Rumer Godden's novel about a the British owners of a jute factory in India is one of the most visually stunning and emotionally overwhelming films ever made. Something of a departure for Renoir, with its languorous pace and episodic structure, the film nevertheless draws us into the petty intrigues of this extended family, most notably the flame-haired Harriet (Patricia Walters) and her animal-like attraction to new neighbour, the peg-legged war veteran Captain John (Arthur Shields). The secluded household at the centre of the film presents life in India under the era of colonial rule as idyllic in the extreme, although Renoir presents the family as existing in an ethereal dream-state that is disconnected from the realities – both positive and negative – that exist outside of the front gates.

At times, the film comes across as one of Renoir's most lively and experimental, with the occasional dance interlude or stylised montage that enhances the notion his film – and all cinema – exists as a fantastic remove from reality. Though the film has been in circulation and accessible for a long time, this new restoration will allow fans and newcomers to experience the ravishing Techincolor cinematography as close to the original as possible. **DAVID JENKINS**

The Servant

Directed by JOSEPH LOSEY
Starring DIRK BOGARDE, SARAH MILES, JAMES FOX

Blu-ray/DVD | *Released* **20 SEPT**

Set in a Chelsea townhouse, Joseph Losey's perverse cat and mouse thriller revolves around dim aristo Tony (James Fox) and his servant Hugo Barrett (Dirk Bogarde). Growing dependent and riveted, Tony sinks deeper and deeper as his class power completely dwindles in the face of Barrett's ambition to gain psychological authority over him. In light of this goal, there's no room for morals, and the most effective means of winning is through sex. A cloud of cigarette smoke, a tap dripping into the sink with each drop falling at regular intervals like the beat of a metronome, eclipsed by Cleo Laine's sultry voice as she hauntingly and repeatedly sings, "Now while I love you, can't love without you, must love without you, alone".

The complex eroticism that develops between the men, cannot be expressed candidly. "You've got a guilty secret... but you'll be caught!" warns Barrett while looking for Tony in a game of hide and seek. It is through the conquest of Barrett's mistress Vera (Sarah Miles) that the chase materialises, developing a destructive, labyrinthine dependency that's enhanced by the increasingly manic performances. Every interaction is a remapping of power relations, with Harold Pinter's dark and suggestive script enriched by Douglas Slocombe's masterful cinematography.

MARINA ASHIOTI

Home ENTS

UK

The Psychic

Directed by LUCIO FULCI
Starring JENNIFER O'NEILL, GABRIELE FERZETTI, MARC POREL

Blu-ray/DVD | *Out* **NOW**

Deep Cover

Directed by BILL DUKE
Starring LAURENCE FISHBURNE, JEFF GOLDBLUM, CHARLES MARTIN SMITH

Blu-ray/DVD | *Released* **23 AUGUST**

At 11.45am on October 12th 1959 in Dover, England, a woman jumps to her death, chunks of her bludgeoned face bouncing off the cliffside as she tumbles. In Florence, Italy, at the exact same time, her daughter has a vision of the incident, and is haunted long after by the knowledge that she knew what had happened before she was told. This is the striking opening of Lucio Fulci's well-crafted giallo *The Psychic*, a flash of brutish gore in an otherwise restrained film that grimly establishes the gift that protagonist Virginia (Jennifer O'Neill) has to live with over the duration of this slow-burn, cleverly plotted film.

Virginia then has fragmented visions of a murder that the viewer also sees. Who the victim will be, and when the act will take place, are unknown, but each image offers a new clue that Fulci weaves together from Roberto Gianviti and Dardano Sacchetti's script. Red herrings throw off attempts at guessing the direction, while dread mounts as puzzle pieces come together and draw the fatal moment closer. The relaxed and stylish buildup is undermined by the clunky overdubbing, while the finale is unexpectedly unsettling, eliciting chills that are magnified by the memorable score, wherein synths and strings are mixed with elements composed on an antique carillon. As a familiar seven note refrain is heard sounding out, the film closes on a note of menace that makes the skin crawl. **MATT TURNER**

Laurence Fishburne descends on what appears as cut-and-dried crime genre material with the gravitas and presence of a Shakespearian heavyweight in Bill Duke's scantling and influential *Deep Cover*. He plays a morally righteous, though down-at-heel LA beat cop who decides to take a dodgy, off-book undercover assignment with a view to salvaging the legacy of his junkie father who was whacked in front of his eyes while robbing a grocery store. The film can be categorised as a neo-noir due to its spicy, hard boiled dialogue, various nighttime escapades and a suffocating (but realistic) sense of despair and cynicism at all strata of society. The proposed strategy sees Fishburne's character sink ever deeper into the criminal underworld with a view to hooking some of the west coast drug scene's most flamboyant players. His mission is muddied when he teams up with Jeff Goldblum's friendly yuppie entrepreneur and sees a side to the industry that is marginally less corrupting, but eventually he begins to realise he's taking his role far too seriously. Director Duke, best known for a string of tough guy acting roles in the '80s and '90s, brings a rough-hewn realism to the proceedings, and is unsparing when it comes to depicting the desolations of Michael Tolkin and Henry Bean's brutal, politically outspoken script. In all, worthy of a big rediscovery. **DAVID JENKINS**

Home ENTS

UK

The Snake Girl and the Silver-Haired Witch

Directed by **NORIAKI YUASA**
Starring **YÛKO HAMADA, SACHIKO MEGURO, YACHIE MATSUI**

Blu-ray/DVD	*Released* **21 SEPTEMBER**

Noriaki Yuasa's *The Snake Girl and the Silver-Haired Witch* is a peculiar film, and something of an anomaly from the Japanese director best known for the Gamera films – the flying nuclear turtle monster film series launched off the back of the success of *Godzilla*. Pitched somewhere between brutal adult horror and dark children's fable, it is a stylish, hallucinatory work that makes fine use of the pockets of gothic shadow present in its multi-level mansion setting, expanding outward from an innocuous opening into increasingly surreal and violent climax.

Adapted from a horror manga from respected genre artist Kazuo Umezu, the film sees a small girl return to her family home after a stay in a boarding school, only to find that all is not well. Lots of rooms in this big, creepy manor are off-limits, a secret sister is hidden in the attic, and there is something very strange about her father's research into venomous snakes. As the girl digs deeper, things turn awry, and over a series of impressively phantasmagoric dream sequences, all hell breaks loose as the two characters referenced in the film's title wreak havoc on the new arrival. The plotting may feel loose and haphazard, but the skill and invention on show in this one-off oddity suggests that, as well-loved as the Gamera films may be, it is a shame that this director did not manage to make much else outside of the world of massive monster franchise films. **MATT TURNER**

Beauty and the Beast

Directed by **JURAJ HERZ**
Starring **ZDENA STUDENKOVÁ, VLASTIMIL HARAPES, VÁCLAV VOSKA**

Blu-ray/DVD	*Out* **NOW**

The 18th century French author Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont has been well served by cinema, particularly when it comes to screen adaptations of her 1740 fairy tale, 'Beauty and the Beast'. This slightly lesser-known 1978 version by Czech filmmaker Juraj Herz sits midway between Jean Cocteau's expressionist 1946 benchmark, and the various animated Disney takes that appeared more recently. This one does away with the clean-cut romance and plush aesthetic finery to present a world in which people wade through bogs, get covered in mud and blood, and eventually happen across a secret castle that is in a state of tragic ruin. The Beast character in this film is no longer styled as a humanoid version of proud jungle cat, but here resembles a mangey bird of prey whose philosophical insights into the field of l'amour belie his repulsive appearance.

Herz's dedication to de-glamourising and de-romanticising this time-honoured tale is what makes this not merely a great adaptation, but a great movie full stop. As ethereal damsel Julie (Zdena Studenková) succumbs to Beast's power games by residing with him while not looking at him, the film really captures the notion of a love so heady that it transcends the senses more so than both its forebears and antecedents. **DAVID JENKINS**

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Words by **HANNAH STRONG**

The Cannes Film Festival

Extra precautions and a new booking system ended up helping the French mega festival to deliver a vintage crop of movies.

In the weeks leading up to the 74th Cannes Film Festival, the programme was the last thing on a lot of travellers' minds. Despite a glamorous line-up including new films from Leos Carax, Wes Anderson, Julia Ducournau and Paul Verhoeven, a cloud of doubt hung over the whole affair, which seemed to be approaching with an air of confidence all but unheard of in the post-Covid festival landscape. Confusion over vaccination and testing requirements for both entering the country and various festival locations kept many regulars away, reportedly resulting in a 30 per cent drop in attendance, but plenty of intrepid filmmakers, journalists, cinephiles and assorted industry folk managed to navigate the myriad bureaucratic hoops and make it to the Côte D'Azur in time for a Cannes quite unlike any other.

"I don't think I'll believe it's really happening until I'm sitting in the cinema waiting for the film to begin," I told my mum when I went to drop the cat off the weekend before my flight to Nice.

Sure enough, it did take a little while for the reality to sink in. The last flight I took was an ill-fated return from Los Angeles in March 2020, the week the pandemic became a cause for concern in the UK and USA. Very little about the experience was different as I approached the bag drop at Heathrow this time, except for the required negative Covid test. The airport employee looked at my result, and my vaccination certificate, and then looked at me. "I don't think you need a negative test to enter France if you're fully vaccinated," he said. I shrugged and explained I'd already paid the £170 for the package: "Better safe than sorry." I checked the requirements when I'd made it through security. Yes, it turns out – I *did* need a negative Covid result to clear French customs.

The absurdity of the very staff employed to check these additional bits of paperwork having no idea what they're supposed to do wasn't lost on me, but I don't blame them at all, considering the rules change just about every day; not a single person among the UK visitors out on the Riviera could work out how long we were supposed to quarantine on arrival, and every additional announcement from the government back home only seemed to complicate matters.

Cannes, to their credit, introduced a number of protocols to prevent the festival becoming the film industry's premiere superspreader event. While vaccinated EU citizens could use an app to confirm their status and enter the main Palais building, everyone else had to make do with a (free!) Covid test every 48 hours, conducted at a temporary facility a short stroll from the Palais. These were not the familiar, gag-inducing tonsil/nasal swabs, but instead required the patient to generate a copious amount of saliva into a test tube for inspection. The sight of 40 people in separate booths, miserably spitting into plastic vials... it's a far cry from the glamour Cannes is usually synonymous with, but it's amazing what indignities you can face in the name of cinema.

Then there was the introduction of an online ticketing system, which required guests to book in advance to see films, rather than standing in the long queues for which the festival has become notorious. Despite a few teething problems, the system worked extremely well, all but removing the prospect of standing in a line for three hours just to get a seat with a bad view for a film it turns out you don't even like. This made it possible to fit more films into any given day, yes, but also provided windows for the important work of writing, and the only slightly less-important work of catching up with friends from far-flung places over a sweating glass of rose and an overpriced pizza.

A few guests were vocally displeased about the restrictions (I witnessed more than one person arguing with the Palais staff about why they should be allowed into the building without a Covid test) but most shrugged and got on with it – even if after a few days, the festival did have to start preceding every screening with a reminder that masks had to be worn by all audience members for the duration.

The other big change was the heat. With the festival held two months later than its usual Maytime slot, the mercury crawled up to 30 degrees most days, and space was at a premium on the only scrap of beach not privatised by the local seafront hotels. The tourists who flock to the town in the summer – not for the celebrities or cinema but the promise of warm sand and the Mediterranean sea – were there in droves, jostling with journalists and film industry insiders for the shadier tables at cafés and restaurants, while the models flown in by fashion houses to walk the red carpet were out in full force, reminding the


Cadillac

“Those are the moments I live for – when it feels as though a filmmaker has synthesised a truth I recognise.”

world that Cannes is as much a runway as a film festival. Everyone was sweaty, everyone was tired, but there was a palpable sense of joy in the air. Even the normally steely security guards were far more jovial this year.

Now, it’s possible the heat and sense of overwhelming joy I felt at being back at a film festival had a little to do with how I reacted to what I saw over the course of 10 days, but the 74th edition did feel like a particularly strong one, with plenty of big-hitters and more than a few under-the-radar gems. Julia Ducournau’s sophomore feature, *Titane*, was the eventual Palme d’Or winner, and it’s just as riotous as every reviewer effusively tweeted it was after the premiere, but my personal favourite was Joachim Trier’s *The Worst Person in the World*, a romantic drama about a young woman finding her place in the modern world. Keenly observed, deeply funny with just a touch of melancholy, it was the second film of the festival to reduce me to tears, and the one I’m more excited to watch again.

Up there too is Mia Hansen-Løve’s self-reflective *Bergman Island*, in which a filmmaking couple (played by Vicky Krieps and Tim Roth) head to Ingmar Bergman’s home on the Danish Faroe Islands and reflect on the nature of art and relationships. It was a good year for introspection, actually; Joanna Hogg’s *The Souvenir Part II* was a similar triumph, while Nadav Lapid’s *Ahed’s Knee* wrestles with the weight of being an Israeli filmmaker opposed to his homeland’s politics. One of my most intriguing discoveries was Panah ‘son of Jafar’ Panahi’s directorial debut, *Hit the Road*, in which we see a perilous family road trip through the eyes of a precocious child. All told, I packed in 28 films, having watched a further five prior to kick-off, and there’s still plenty more from the programme I’m hoping to watch further down the line.

I came away from the festival sunburnt, dehydrated, and in desperate need of a good night’s sleep, but with a feeling of professional satisfaction it’s been hard to find during the past eighteen months. The subject of how ‘essential’ film festivals are comes up every single year without fail, and from a journalistic point of view, it’s a crash course in the next 18 months of cinema, where you can earmark filmmakers and titles for coverage, and spot any emerging trends that seem interesting. Mostly, you write, and write, and write some more, championing the films that you love. There’s an element of networking, but it’s as formal or loose as you make it, and while there will always be the in-crowd who go to Cannes for the parties, but I, for better or worse, do not make up their number.

The pandemic has created a multitude of online and hybrid formats; many expressed disappointment that Cannes decided to opt for a completely physical editions (although the virtual market, for distributors and buyers, took place online several weeks earlier) as virtual festivals have given people the opportunity to experience major festivals such as Toronto, Sundance, New York and London from the comfort of their own homes. Access to physical festival spaces is still exclusive, and more could be done by festival organisers to subsidise travel and accommodation for journalists from underrepresented backgrounds. Despite festivals relying on press for coverage, we’re often something of an afterthought in organisation.

But while virtual festivals provide access to movies, what I’ve missed the most is human connection. I go to the cinema not just to be entertained but to not be alone, too. Sitting in the dark experiencing something (whether I’m surrounded by strangers or friends) does something to my brain chemistry. It’s not an experience I can replicate with my laptop and bed; when the credits roll through tinny speakers, there’s no one I can turn to for a post-screening debrief over a coffee or glass of wine.

I don’t think I fully understood how alone I’d been until I was back somewhere that makes me so happy, with people I value so much. This feeling crystalised watching Julia, the protagonist of *The Worst Person in the World*, lament, “I feel like a spectator in my own life.” Those are the moments I live for, as a critic yes, but as a film lover more so – when it feels as though a filmmaker has synthesised a truth I recognise, reached through the screen and tapped me on the shoulder.

The majestic spectacle of cinema and its power to exert a profound impact on us is something I really believe in, which is surprising, given that I voluntarily sat through Sean Penn’s turgid self-congratulatory *Flag Day*. Festivals are like concerts to me; a chance to be alone, together, united by a shared passion. Of course there are things that frustrate me about Cannes but attending this strange, special year felt – for lack of a better word – inspiring. A reminder that after so long locked indoors, there’s a whole world out there, and it doesn’t wait for anyone

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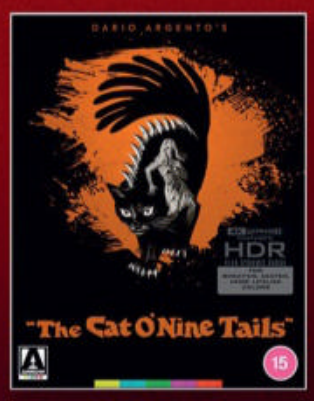

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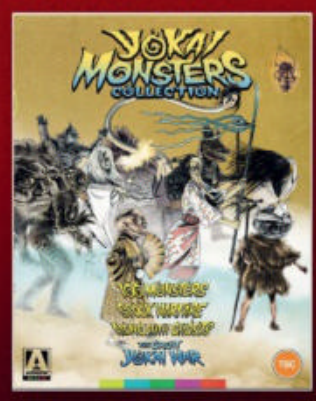

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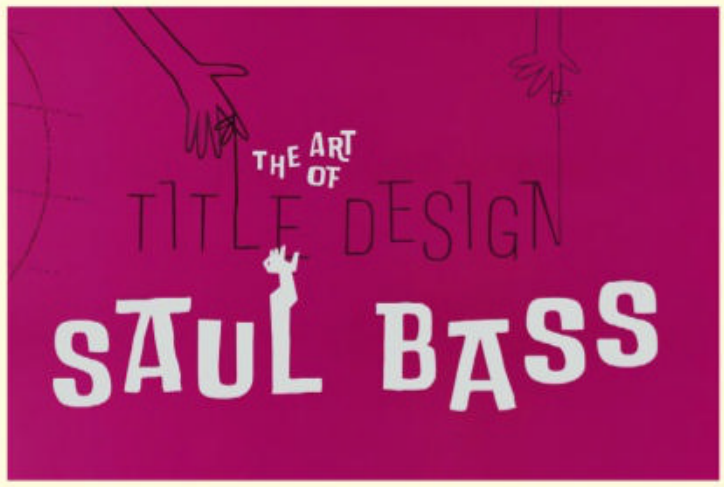

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On the cover

Lola Beltrán is an artist currently based in Valencia. She recreates the imagery of the things she grew up with, wandering around the local video rental aisles and being astonished by all the ’90s gems on the shelves, including old westerns, Hollywood blockbusters and classic anime like *Perfect Blue* or *Akira*. She says: “To be able to work on the *Dune* cover has been a total delight since I remember seeing the video cover (but not watching the film!) of David Lynch’s take on the book. Plus Chalamet’s cutie pie face was a bonus. We worked together on finding a color palette that suited the movie aesthetics and also my usual chromatic choices and the result evokes the movie’s atmosphere. It’s always a huge pleasure for me to work with the *LWLies* team.”

Instagram: @_lolabeltran

Little White Lies

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Illustrators

Adriana Bellet is an illustrator who delights in drawing spirited faces and colourful spaces. She can be found at home in Stockholm in constant pursuit of a quiet corner. It is a futile exercise thanks to her two young sons and opinionated dog so she usually settles for a free surface to place her iPad Pro on.

Alex Fine is a Baltimore based illustrator who loves punk rock, cats, and a wide variety of unhealthy snack cakes. Film and television have always been a great source of inspiration in his work.

Rumbidzai Savanhu is a Zimbabwean-born, Birmingham-based illustrator with an interest in film, music and storytelling. She loves playing around with bold, bright colours, and exploring new compositions within her work.

Stéphanie Sergeant is a French illustrator/animator living and working in Poland. She mostly works with watercolour and animates in 2D. She likes spaghetti and the dark, long process of animation.

Nick Taylor is an illustrator and designer based in Nottinghamshire. He combines his love of drawing, collage, mark-making and printing with digital techniques. He is an avid music fan and record collector and co-hosts a radio show on Slack City in Brighton

Feature writers

Anton Bitel is a freelance film critic, specialising in genre. He also programmes for the London Korean Film Festival.

Lillian Crawford is a freelance writer exploring representations of women and queer people for *BBC Culture*, *Sight & Sound*, and her *Listen to Lillian* blog and podcast. Find her on Twitter @lillcrawf.

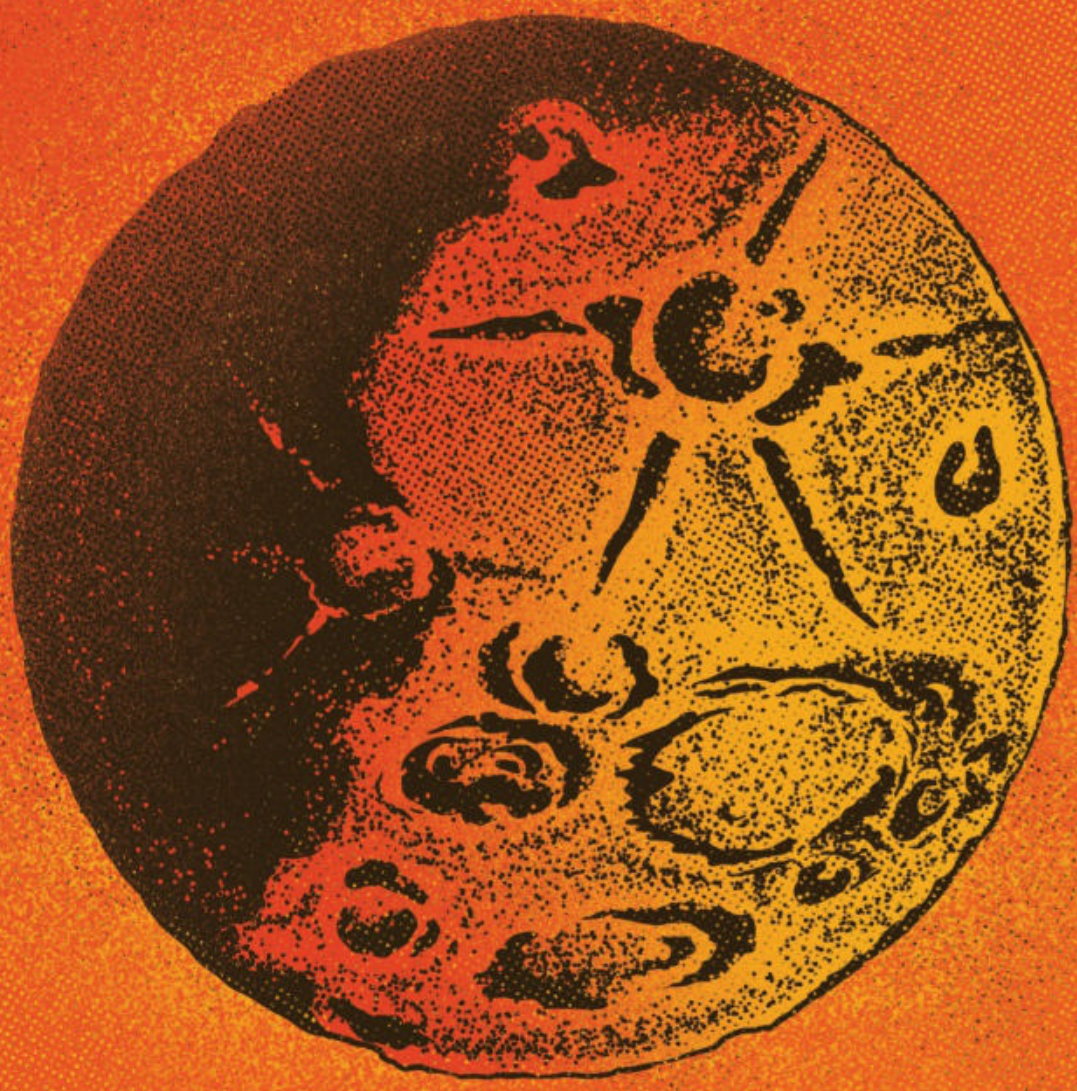
Jake Cunningham is a writer and producer. He co-created the podcast 'Ghibliotheque' and is the co-writer of the Ghibliotheque book, which offers a guide to the film works of Studio Ghibli. He has made video essays with *Little White Lies* and the *BBC*, and has written for the *BFI*, *NME*, *The I* and more.

Tom 'Kwisatz' Huddleston is a freelance film journalist, musician and author whose books include the 'FloodWorld' trilogy – 'FloodWorld', 'DustRoad' and the forthcoming 'StormTide' – and the official 'Star Wars: Adventures in Wild Space' series.

Leila Latif is a writer and broadcaster who regular contributes to *Little White Lies*, *Sight & Sound*, *Total Film*, *The A.V. Club*, Radio 4's *Front Row*, the BBC World Service's *The Arts Hour*, and have appeared in print for the *Guardian*, Frieze, *BBC Culture*, *BAFTA*, and many more. She is a member of the London Critics' Circle and part of The Final Girls film collective that explores the intersection of feminism and horror cinema. She has hosted events at the BFI, appeared on BBC2 and many thousands of podcasts, and (most importantly) Lebron James's Instagram.

Michael Leader is Commissioning Editor of the BBC iPlayer series Inside Cinema. He hosts *LWLie*s' weekly review podcast Truth & Movies and co-hosts Ghibliotheque, the podcast that has recently been adapted into an in-depth guide to the films of Studio Ghibli

Philippa Snow is a writer, based in Norwich. Her reviews and essays have appeared in publications including *Artforum*, *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, *ArtReview*, *Frieze*, *The White Review*, *Vogue*, *The New Statesman*, and *The New Republic*.



Alt Sci-fi Movies
Some personal favourites
By David Jenkins

(Alphabetical)
AI: Artificial Inteligence (200I)
Alphaville (I965)
The Brother From Another Planet (I984)
The Congress (20I3)
The Day the Earth Stood Still (I95I)
Dredd (20I2)
Ghost in the Shell (I995)
Gravity (20I3)
High Life (20I8)
Ikari XB I (I963)
Invention for Destruction (I958)
Je t'aime, Je t'aime (I968)
Le Jetee (I962)
Lifeforce (I985)
Liquid Sky (I982)
The Man From Planet X (I95II)
The Man Who Fell to Earth (I976)
Metropolis (I927)
Monsters (20I0)
Primer (2004)
Quatermass and the Pit (I964)
Snowpiercer (20I3)
Solaris (I972)
Soylent Green (I973)
Spione (I928)
THX II38 (I97I)
Total Recall (I990)
Welcome II the Terrordomme (I995)
World on a Wire (I973)

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- GAIKA

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