

## + SPLINTERS (VIII)

*Any Which Way You Can Dvd, Bronco Billy Dvd, Closer Dvd, Culture For Pigeons (Tracy + The Plastics), Enron: The Smartest Guys In The Room, Les États-Unis D'albert, Every Which Way But Loose Dvd, Formula 17, The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy, The Gauntlet Dvd, La Grande Illusion Dvd, Greendale (Neil Young), Hitch, The Interpreter, Jams Dvd, Jiminy Glick In La La Wood, The Life Aquatic With Steve Zissou Dvd, Los Angeles Plays Itself, Melinda And Melinda, Mindhunters, Napoleon For Awbile, Now, Voyager Dvd, The Outlaw Josey Wales Dvd, Raiders Of The Lost Ark: The Adaptation, Searching For The Wrong-Eyed Jesus, Sponge Bob Square Pants, Sudden Impact Dvd, Le Survenant, Tian Bian Yi Duo Yun, Touch The Sound, Unleashed, What The #,\$\*! Do We Know!?*

### THE FLICKERS

#### *Les États-Unis D'albert* (André Forcier, 2005)

What a surprise? A well-written, well-acted comedy directed with a light touch and visual flair. I left this movie wanting to rewatch *The Son Of The Shiek* (1926), did, and then wanted to go back to see this film. Hands down my most satisfying movie experience in a long time. I'm going to track down more of Forcier's films.  
-Brian Crane

#### *Formula 17* (Yin-jung Chen, Taiwan, 2004)

[Sex in the (Taiwanese) City: part 1] ... Everybody was taken aback when this movie made its way to the top of the Taiwanese box office charts last summer. Although not as sexy and funny as South Korea's hilarious *Sex*

*Is Zero, Formula 17* is a very interesting teen romantic comedy. Amusingly, even though there are no girls whatsoever in the film, *Formula 17* was directed by first-timer Chen Yin-jung, a 24y/o woman! It's an important film in the Taiwanese cinema not only because it tackles several taboos in Asia (the film was hence banned in Singapore) but also because *Formula 17* is one of the rare films to break away from the 'social realism' most Taiwanese directors use.

-P-A Despatis D.

#### *Hitch* (Andy Tennant 2005)

Charming Will Smith is a ladykiller with a big broken heart. My goodness! (Yawn.)

-Amy Fung

#### *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* (Garth Jennings, 2005)

As it was the case with most of the intertextual references in *The Simpsons*, I saw the parody before the actual movie. It was rather shocking to finally see *Citizen Kane* after having seen its numerous parodies in *The Simpsons* several times. Although I was very familiar with the name and although I had seen Douglas Adams a couple of times on TV, this release of *Hitchhiker's Guide* was my very first experience of Douglas Adams' oeuvre (no comments please!!). While watching the film I couldn't help noticing how the character of Zaphod Beeblebrox seemed to be inspired by Zapp Brannigan on *Futurama*! Isn't there a certain cinephilic pleasure of entertaining this thought? That being said, the movie is entertainment at its finest and

it's a great companion to the book (which I have now started to read). Oh, and by the way, I'm soooooooooo getting one of those sighing doors when I buy a loft!  
-P-A Despatis D.

***The Interpreter* (Sydney Pollack, 2005)**

*The Interpreter* harkens back to a time when middlebrow cinema was a force. It takes but a moment to recall that this story of a white African revolutionary is directed by Sydney Pollack, whose *Out Of Africa* is the seminal piece of 80s middlebrow. It takes but a moment to link the convoluted plot to Pollack's gloriously middling 70s paranoia-thriller *Three Days Of The Condor*, another seminal film of its age. Then, Pollack himself comes on screen, and Robert Altman, Woody Allen, and the essence of the middlebrow is burned onto your retina. Not to worry; it's a good pain.

-Jerry White

***Jiminy Glick In La La Wood* (Vadim Jean, 2004)**

Amidst the numerous celebrity cameos this movie offers, one of my co-workers makes a cameo of her own. She stands stone-faced and indifferent in the background of many of the red carpet scenes at the Toronto International Film Festival (where she works in the press office,) while Jiminy Glick (Martin Short) hams it up a few metres away interviewing the likes of Sharon Stone and Kevin Kline. Equally unfazed by the ghastly antics of Glick as she is by the sparkle of celebrity, she unwittingly gauges just how humourless and unglamorous this movie is.

-Zoë Constantinides

***Melinda And Melinda* (Woody Allen, 2005)**

The later work of any great screen comic (Buster Keaton, the Marx Brothers, Steve Martin) is always open to ravaging by two equally haughty factions: A) the naysayers, who take anything the comic does from inside the shadow cast by his great films ; and, B) the contrarians bent on reclaiming later misunderstood works. As someone who has made a private hobby of defending Woody Allen, I have to concede with prejudice that *Melinda & Melinda* sits nicely on the shelf with *Sweet & Lowdown* and *Celebrity*, but I wonder if that's a concession? The trailer sells *Melinda And Melinda* on the film's doubling up on the word "obsequious." There's peculiar and disquieting irony in that—made stranger still coming from actors whose performances in the film could be summed up with that very word.

-Gareth Hedges

***Mindhunters* (Renny Harlin, 2005)**

I was rather scared when I saw Renny Harlin's name associated to the project; I wasn't sure we could expect a decent film after his recent film *Driven*. *Mindhunters* turns out to be a very good action flick! It has its flaws like most action films but it's entertaining throughout.

-P-A Despatis D.

***Raiders Of The Lost Ark: The Adaptation* (1989/2004)**

Three pubescent boys from Mississippi spend eight years making a Beta Cam shot-by-shot remake (not homage, not parody) of their Hollywood holy grail. The audiences may be howling with grown-up laughter at the heartfelt dream of three little boys, but one can feel mostly good about it. Maybe thirty-somethings Eric, Chris and Jayson cringe a little when they watch themselves, but those boys have been vindicated. This film is priceless: simple, pure, miraculous.

-Zoë Constantinides

***Sponge Bob Square Pants* (Stephen Hillenburg 2004)**

Riding the waves on the hairy sun-blotched flabby back of David Hasselhoff, *Sponge Bob Square Pants* is exactly this: a good time in an improbable situation, with deep-sea fun, song and dance—anyone who still doesn't 'get' *Sponge Bob Square Pants* is just thinking too damn hard.

-Amy Fung

***Le Survenant* (Eric Canuel, 2005)**

If I had a pet hog and trained him to laugh, he would sound like le survenant. Unpleasant.

-Brian Crane

***Tian Bian Yi Duo Yun* (Ming-liang Tsai, Taiwan, 2005, Quebec title: *Wayward Cloud / Un Nuage Au Bord Du Ciel*)**

[Sex in the (Taiwanese) City: part 2] ... I like Asian films, I like musicals; boy was I in Heaven !

-P-A Despatis D.

***Unleashed* (Louis Leterrier, 2005)**

A man trained as a dog slowly learns to take back his place in society after he finds refuge in an antique shop where he meets a caring blind man. This learning process is well depicted on the screen and it is very strong emotionally. Up to that point, the film is well

done and well written. Then, the dog's former owner finds him and decides to make him fight again. It quickly turns ugly; both for the dog and for the film. The last section of the film is a pure mess with major script problems. The weird blend of drama and action is questionable in *Unleashed*. People expecting to see an action-packed film will find the first half of the film utterly boring and people who like the first part of the film will greatly be disappointed by the second half of the film.

-P-A Despatis D.

## DOCUMENTARY

### ***Enron: The Smartest Guys In The Room* (Alex Gibney, 2005)**

The best that can be said about this New American Liberal Outrage doc was said by an elderly man sitting behind me in the theatre—the only other patron to stay through the credits. As I got up, he looked at me and grimaced. I raised my eyebrows in acknowledgement, and he muttered “Oh! la-la” shaking his head in disgust. That is to say that like any good exploitation film, *Enron: The Smartest Guys In The Room* served its purpose: arousing self-satisfied liberal disgust (which incidentally is the only way American liberals seem to get aroused anymore). I strongly suspect that my new theatre buddy came to the movie just to oh-la-la it in despair, just as I had come in hopes of raising my eyebrows.

-Gareth Hedges

### ***Los Angeles Plays Itself* (Thom Andersen, 2003)**

Much of my misspent youth passed in the inviting darkness of a local cinema, but it is with good grace that I bow to Thom Andersen's clearly superior knowledge of the back roads and byways of film history. The comprehensive picture of movie L.A. that he builds through his compendium of clips provides a multifaceted portrait not only of a place but also of an industry with a seriously bizarre self-image. The danger is, perhaps, that the film clips themselves are just fascinating enough to detract from his thesis. I can work on my tan later. For now, I'll be spending more time in the dark...

-Celia Nicholls

### ***Napoleon For Awhile* (Fuer Kurze Zeit Napoleon, Bart van Esch, 2004)**

Poor Wolfgang. At 55 years old, he has no wife, no job

and the mother he lived with his entire life has passed away. His musical and filmmaking aspirations are fodder for the gong show at the neighbourhood bar. Now, Bart van Esch went and made a documentary about him. Everybody look at Wolfgang, isn't he funny? Isn't he sad? Isn't he oblivious? Wasn't he destined to end up like this? This documentary makes you feel uncomfortable and ashamed. I can't decide if that's a good or bad thing.

-Zoë Constantinides

### ***Searching For The Wrong-Eyed Jesus* (Andrew Douglas 2003)**

A documentary with the appearance of a meticulously orchestrated storyboard? A tale of the Deep South with a great rambling mouth of a man in boots and a pearl white cowboy hat? Yes and double yes. Yarns are spun; tales are told. The morbid simplicity of the Handsome Family is captured on a floating barge, slowly passing by with the unrelenting stare capable by only those playing their souls out in a swamp. This is God's county; and the reverence is beautiful and lucidly saturated in every single note and frame.

-Amy Fung

### ***Touch The Sound* (Thomas Riedelsheimer 2004)**

Low gliding cameras and long steady shots of something seemingly awesome, Riedelsheimer's subject matters always fall short of the reverence he frames them in. Evelyn Glennie is an amazingly astute percussionist, feeling the rhythm of the world through her body. She just so happens to be deaf, and although her accomplishments are worthy of documenting, the expression of the human body as a perceptive feeling instrument is disappointingly captured in slow tracking jam sessions or static interviews. For crying out loud, let the rhythm move you!

-Amy Fung

### ***What The #\$! Do We Know!?!\** (William Arntz, Betsy Chasse, Mark Vicente, 2004)**

After watching this documentary we're left wondering 'what the #\$! did I learn while watching this documentary?' Although it presents some very interesting facts, like a mysterious way to reduce crime in big cities, the movie sticks to the surface of many theories and ultimately fails to put all the pieces of the puzzle together. Or, was I (or the 'hidden observer' in my body) too naive to think a 108-minute long documentary could explain quantum physics to me

? Oh well, the truth is (and will remain) out there ...  
Scary!

-*P-A Despatis D.*

## DVD

### ***Closer* (Mike Nichols, 2004)**

Cold calculating characters in a web of seduction and betrayal Love is lost, lust is gained: Law as a dark, seedy, needy, lover Owen as a deliciously spiteful cuckold obsessed with ownership Sex is a “guilty fuck” mind game: narcissism overshadows sensuality Erotic professional: Portman plays an immature lover and lacks sultriness Regret that Roberts is cast as a tortured unfaithful wife (the torture is in her acting)

-*Andrea Ariano*

### ***La Grande Illusion* (Jean Renoir, 1937)**

Considering films as works of art, *La Grande Illusion* ought to come quite high on anyone’s top-ten list. It looks beautiful on screen, and its construction—with a minimum of editing, and a maximum of camera movement—is essential to the film’s brilliantly compelling anti-war message. Renoir is refreshingly principled and the viewer is never faced with the problem of determining whether the visual aesthetic actually glorifies the violence that the film itself pretends to condemn. Yet, perhaps his greatest feat of all is in making what is essentially a film about several men in a small room carry universal significance.

-*Celia Nicholls*

### ***Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975)**

Admittedly, there are many reasons to hate *Jaws*. It is, after all, the movie that inaugurated the current Hollywood obsession with the bottom dollar, and paved the way for any number of aesthetically and morally bankrupt money spinning summer blockbusters. Yet *Jaws* is more than the B-grade, monster schlock. It is, in its way, a minor artistic masterpiece. Recall, for example, the formal perfection of that shot of Captain Quint’s butcher knife, its tip embedded in the boards of the ship’s deck, or the rippling pages of the shark book as reflected in Chief Brody’s glasses. Such indelible images give *Jaws* its bite.

-*Celia Nicholls*

### ***The Life Aquatic With Steve Zissou* (Wes Anderson, 2004)**

The thing is, is, that I knew all along that this film would be a grower. I knew it. And sure enough, only days after its home video release, the promise and the vision of Anderson’s final instalment of his... errr... “hyper realist” father-and-sons trilogy is now clear to me. The characters are as real as they ever were, and as they days go by the complexity of the story and the depth of it all flows over me. Working upon the the score of *The Royal Tenenbaums*, composer Mark Mothersbaugh has built the whole of the *The Life Aquatic* upon the back of the central theme of Anderson’s previous film. The same as it ever was. And in the middle of it all is an inspired Bowie cum Brazil soundtrack and the sort of set pieces that are nothing less than a Max Fischer wetdream. Makes me happy.

-*Mike Baker*

### ***Now, Voyager* (Irving Rapper, 1942)**

*Now, Voyager* is a film very much of its time, an era in which both deep explorations of feminine psychology and smoking were in vogue. In this age of political correctness, Paul Heinreid’s nifty two-cigarette trick as a signifier for romance is bound to seem bathetic, even absurd; while the faith that all the secondary characters seem to place in the curative power of psychoanalysis is almost touching. Yet, with its irony-free melodrama, *Now, Voyager* is effortlessly winning. Here is a film in which the stars in the tatty cardboard sky glitter just enough to provide the Hollywood illusion of quality.

-*Celia Nicholls*

## MUSIC

### ***Culture For Pigeons* (Tracy + the Plastics, 2004)**

Grasping for a form flexible enough to unite electropop and media-based performance, NYC artist Wynne Greenwood seizes on a simulated band. During her video concerts, Greenwood (as singer/bandleader Tracy) interacts with carefully timed, pre-recorded music and video projections of alter egos Nikki (keyboards) and Cola (drumbeats). Greenwood’s strategies for undoing the cult of (lesbian) personality/rock star are carried further on her album *Culture for Pigeons*, which includes two supplementary video sketches. One, *We Hear Swooping Guitars*, layers faux rehearsal footage with computer-generated drawings of flies, elephants and woolly mammoths. In the guise of Nikki, Greenwood points out the band’s name “upholds the

historical hierarchy of the rock band,” initiating a self-questioning disintegration. Throughout their practice, digital blobs interrupt, enchant and dissipate.

-Brett Kashmere

### **Greendale (Neil Young, 2003)**

For every image in this counterpart to his Bush-thumping eco-concept album of the same name, there is something strangely charming about picturing Neil Young operating the super-8 camera making them. Young brilliantly satisfies this curiosity in the finale (where else?) by including a few fleeting glimpses of himself filming the “band” on stage.

-Gareth Hedges

## **CLINT EASTWOOD ♥ SONDRALOCKE**

Spring, 2005: love is in the air and what better time to review the curious collaborative relationship between 2005 Oscar darling Clint Eastwood and 1969 Oscar nominee Sondra Locke. Theirs was a love that lasted nearly fifteen years off-screen and produced six movies. A sober reminder the dangers of mixing love and work, their relationship—like *Bronco Billy*—ended badly in very public palimony suit with requisite tabloid mudslinging, but the films are all available on DVD as part of Warner Bros. “Clint Eastwood Collection.” The Eastwood/Locke 6 are collected together here in a set Warner’s will never box:

### ***The Outlaw Josey Wales* (Clint Eastwood, 1976)**

Eastwood’s Josey Wales is a rogue who can’t help but make friends as he avenges his family’s murder at the hands of Union soldiers. Locke becomes one of these friends, but she only appears an hour into Eastwood’s first revisionist western, as a Kansas girl journeying to Texas and a new life after the Civil War. Soon after we first see Locke, her clothing is torn to shreds and she is nearly raped by a gang of marauders. Eastwood doesn’t save her, but they do fall in love. All and all, a relationship and career high: no one is raped and no one sings.

### ***The Gauntlet* (Clint Eastwood, 1977)**

Phoenix police officer/Jack Daniels aficionado Clint Eastwood has to transport prostitute/prisoner-turned-key mob witness Sondra Locke from Las Vegas to Phoenix. They don’t like each other at first, but again they fall in love and that love endures a TAB-drinking

and otherwise foul mouthed cop, a motorcycle-vs-helicopter chase, another near gang-rape (this time by angry bikers), and a bus ride to Phoenix.

### ***Every Which Way But Loose* (James Fargo, 1978) & *Any Which Way You Can* (Buddy Van Horn, 1980)**

Like the binging implied in “Beers to You”—the duet between Ray Charles & Clint Eastwood that opens *Any Which Way You Can*—these films are best taken one after another until you can’t remember which one you’re watching. In both films, Locke has to compete for Eastwood’s affections with Clyde, a cheeky orangutan (actually played by different apes in each movie, but they’re both as charming and cute as seventies simian cinema has to offer). In short: beer, shirtless bare-knuckle street-fighting, music that’s a little country bit/a little bit western, Ruth Gordon, Geoffrey Lewis, Fats Domino and Glen Campbell. Warning: Locke also sings!

### ***Bronco Billy* (Clint Eastwood, 1980)**

No apes, but plenty of country music, dives and the amber liquids poured therein. Locke is an upper-crust New York bride who when jilted by Geoffrey Lewis, falls for circus gunslinger Eastwood. At one point, she is assaulted after leaving a barfight!, giving Eastwood an excuse to beat up two more men. The absurd *deus ex machina* involves prisoners in a mental facility knitting a new tent for Bronco Billy’s Wild West show out of American flags. Bronco Billy’s is a circus of dreams, we are told, where anyone can be what they want. Locke wants to be Eastwood’s assistant. (Aim high! In real life she wanted, of course, to direct, see *Ratboy*.) Ultimately, not as good as a film with Scatman Crothers as ringmaster of a Wild West show ought to be.

### ***Sudden Impact* (Clint Eastwood, 1980)**

Apparently realizing that Sondra Locke was nearly sexually assaulted in most of the films she made with Eastwood, *Sudden Impact* casts her as a rape-revenger who systematically kills off each of those who wronged her, while Dirty Harry hunts her down and falls for her. The fourth Dirty Harry movie and the first directed by Eastwood offers Dirty Harry in love, make my day, and the last of Eastwood/Locke collaborations, appropriately it ends on sour a note.

— (all) Gareth Hedges