favourites

CUT/TO

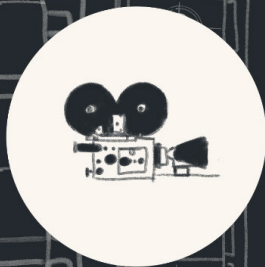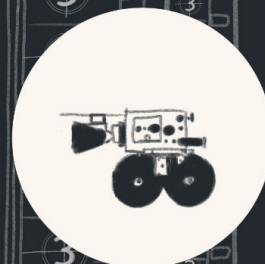## THE LANCASTER UNIVERSITY FILM JOURNAL
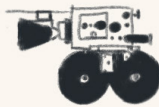
favourite

/feɪ.vər.ɪt/

a person who is treated with special kindness by some- one in authority

"I'm not bad. I'm just drawn that way."

Roger Rabbit (1988)

"Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, she walks into mine."

Casablanca (1942)

favourite

/feɪ.vər.ɪt/

a thing that some-
one likes best or
enjoys most

favourite

/ˈfeɪ.vər.ɪt/

best liked or most enjoyed

"Mama says, 'Stupid is as stupid does.'"

Forrest Gump (1994)

Other Favourite Movie Quotes:

"Every time a bell rings, an angel gets his wings." A Wonderful Life (1946)

"I'll be back." Terminator (1984)

"Hello. My name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die." Princess Bride (1987)

"Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore." The Wizard of Oz (1939)

"I am serious. And don't call me Shirley." Airplane (1980)
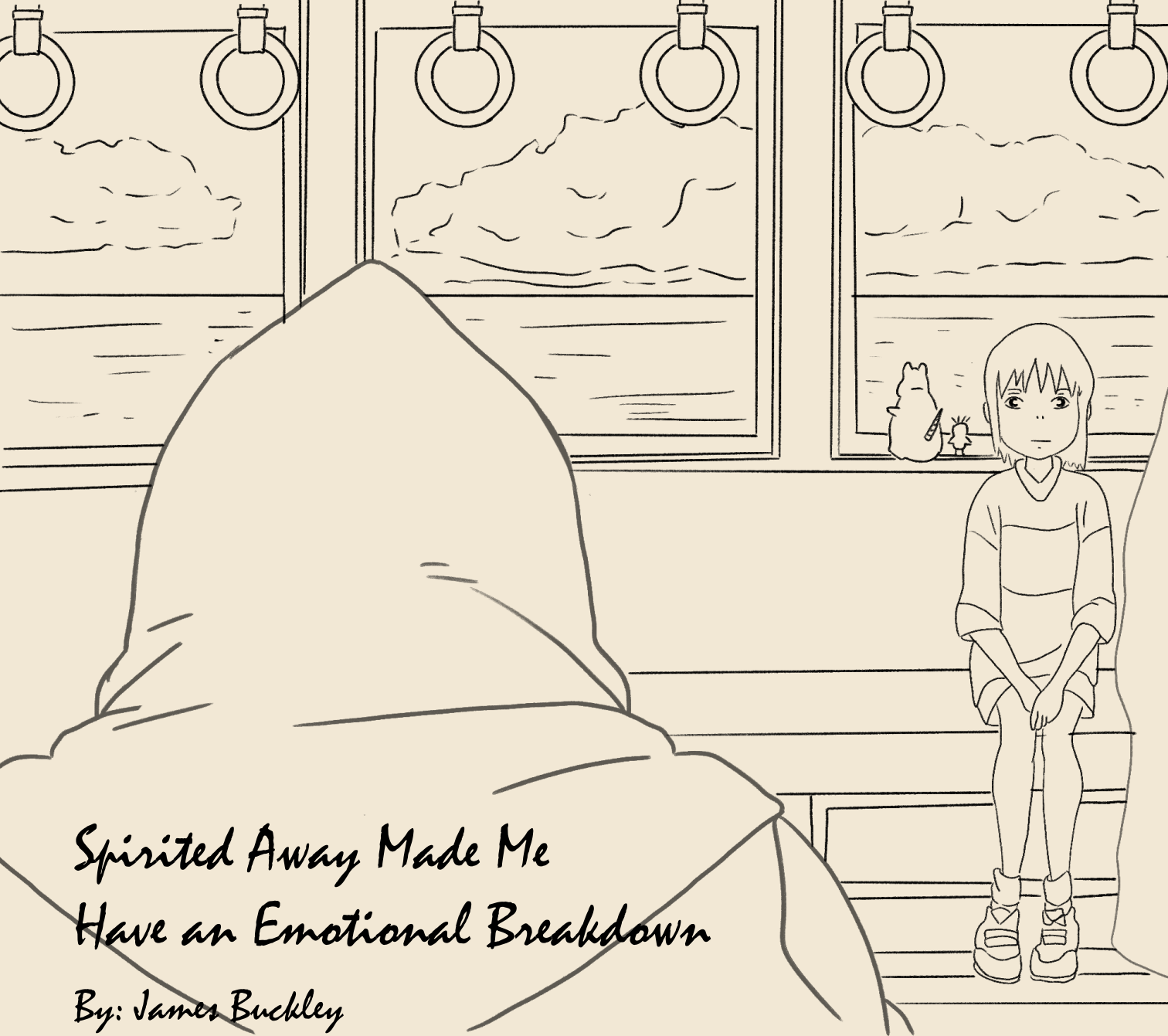
"To infinity and beyond!" Toy Story (1995)

"Yippie-ki-yay, motherf—er!" Die Hard (1988)

"Carpe diem. Seize the day, boys." Dead Poets Society (1989)

"Leave the gun. Take the cannoli." The Godfather (1972)

Contents:

Spirited Away Made Me Have an Emotional Breakdown

By: James Buckley

If any one genre has been an integral part of my childhood, it's animation. I was 3 years old when my parents took me to see The Polar Express; my first film in the cinema. It was such an overwhelming experience that I spent most of the 90-minute run time with my hands cupped over my ears, complaining that it was too loud and most likely not appreciating the spectacle in front of me (good thing Letterboxd didn't exist back then). Despite this rather negative initial experience with animated cinema, it served as a prelude to a long-standing love affair with the genre which would be an everlasting presence throughout my childhood. From the highs of Toy Story to the lows of Space Chimps 2, I've seen it all. But no animated film has had near-

ly as profound an effect on me and my adult life as Hayao Miyazaki's Spirited Away.

As a child, my only memories of Spirited Away were of how terrifying it was. From Kamaji, the multi-armed boiler operator, to the grotesquely wrinkled witch, Yubaba, who oversees the bathhouse (in which most of the film is set), it was more than enough to make 7-year-old me want to burn the DVD and never go near the film again. However, upon turning 18, something compelled me to revisit these rather unsettling and enigmatic memories I had of Spirited Away and finally rewatch it. Seeing the film again, within the context of the plot (which I'd never really followed as a child), felt both nostalgic, and brand new. It was a surreal experience to

be so familiar and unfamiliar with something simultaneously, but it was a completely unique viewing experience that I haven't felt for any other film. However, I never expected to have an emotional experience as profound as I did.

On the surface, Spirited Away is a (somewhat traumatising) kids' film. It shares much of the spectacle and wonder of a Disney-Pixar film. Yet at its heart, it has so much more to offer. The central themes of anxiety over change and fear of isolation are clear throughout, which is one explanation as to why the film can seem so unsettling to many. The film's young protagonist, Chihiro, is thrown into a world beyond her (and our) imagination and is forced to fend for herself against no-faced spirits, witches, dragons and so much more, in or-

der to save her parents from a curse, retain her identity and return to the human world. It draws upon fears that we all experience at points in our lives when we are forced into unfamiliar surroundings and forced to adapt to significant changes. Having watched it at a time when I was preparing to leave home and start university, this sensationalised theme of anxiety resonated with me. It was a projection of my internalised perturbation at entering a distinct, new phase of my life. This contrast between the medium of animation - a genre I'd always found comfort in and had associated with memories of my childhood - and Spirited Away's ability to portray feelings that seemed so adult and felt so relevant to me in my later teenage years was what made the effect of this film on me such a profound one.

The fear factor of the film that I experienced as a child never left, however. It's still bloody scary. Although now I at least have context to the parts I remember being traumatised by. There's a scene within the first act of the film which involves Chihiro standing awkwardly in an elevator with a monstrous, looming creature - kind of like a twisted My Neighbour

Totoro - who is referred to only as 'the Radish Spirit'. It glares menacingly at our protagonist out of the corner of its eye as Chihiro tries to remain calm and not reveal the fact that she's a human in the spirit world. Now, I don't know what a 'Radish Spirit' is. I don't like radishes, but I wouldn't necessarily describe them as scary. This scene, however, always unsettles me. The contrast between the small Chihiro and the towering beast standing next to her, glaring at her without saying a word, captures the feeling of smallness and vulnerability in a big, scary world. But the entire film thrives on these encounters with the unknown. The sense of quite never knowing what anything is or whether we should even be here, looking in on this with Chihiro, is certainly reminiscent of how I remember feeling on my first University open day, looking around at this new adult world that I didn't feel like I belonged in.

However, despite the bewildering and anxiety-inducing world that Miyazaki creates in Spirited Away, it is also a film that oozes pure human emotion unlike any I've seen before. The soundtrack acts as dialogue and guides us along Chihiro's emotional

journey as we see her fall deeper into this strange, lonely world. To this day, I can't hear 'One Summer Day' without tearing up (thanks Joe Hisaishi). But this gorgeous soundtrack is only one piece of the emotional jigsaw. The authenticity of our human protagonist is what really ties it up. Despite the fantasy setting, Spirited Away is a realist film. It uses the most subtle details to create characters that feel real. Details such as the way Chihiro stumbles when she walks, each character's intricate hand motions, even the way that their clothes crease. They all come together to depict characters who seem so alive. It creates a blend of realism and fantasy that is so difficult to get right in animated films but appears to be so seamless in Spirited Away. It makes the human aspects of the film feel so much purer and more lifelike because they're set against the backdrop of this surreal world that juxtaposes with and threatens those human aspects. As a viewer, I felt so much more attachment to Chihiro and her journey to get back to the real world because the lack of belonging felt so apparent to both of us.

Chihiro's story made me realise just how scared I was to move on to adulthood.

I had no idea where the road ahead was leading me or what challenges lay in store. But when she made that walk back to the arms of her parents in the closing minutes, knowing she'd faced the unknown and triumphed; knowing she hadn't let cruelty shape her as a person; knowing she was walking out of it stronger and more human than ever, I knew that whatever lay ahead, I was capable of facing. Despite this, I cried for days after watching Spirited Away. I'm still not quite sure why, as I definitely wasn't sad. I think I was just overwhelmed by what I had experienced in those 2 hours and just how much it resonated with me. I couldn't think of anything else for weeks afterwards and I felt completely floored by this wave of emotions I simply wasn't ready for. There isn't a day that goes by that I don't think of this film. A film so good, so pure in my mind, that I will never watch it again. It served its purpose for me at such a key point in my life. I've seen plenty of amazing films since, but I'm yet to find a film that has touched me the way Spirited Away has.

R R R

RISE ROAR REVOLT
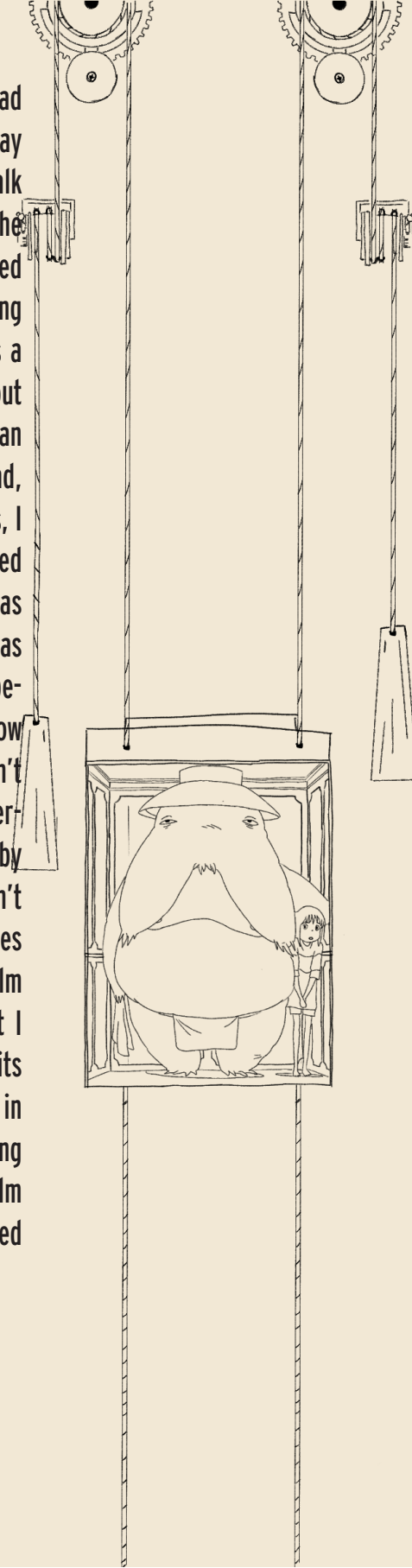
By: Joe Saunders

R.R.R is a three hour long, Telgu action epic based loosely (and I mean very loosely), on real events from Indian history - starring superstars N.T Rama Rao Jr and Ram Charan and directed by S.S Rajamouli. It was released earlier this year and it quickly became one of the highest grossing Indian films of all time.

The first time I saw R.R.R, I was left speechless. It made me wish I could've seen it in a crowded cinema opening day, instead of watching it in my bedroom at 1am. I struggle to describe what makes it such a special film. Partly due to the fact that it's such a visual spectacle, I think you just need to watch it to truly understand, but I'll do my best.

I think if I had to boil down what factors make R.R.R work as well as it does, I would say that it is the action, tone and characters. The films' action set pieces are truly awe inspiring, it evokes the best of filmmakers like Sam Rami or Stephen Chow. Where the action is constantly trying to surprise the spectator as it tries to be creative with the camera. CGI sometimes gets unfairly villainised in my opinion, especially considering the time and work VFX artists put in. I only take issue with CGI when it is used as a crutch instead of as a tool. R.R.R does the latter. It expertly combines CGI and practical effects to create action that is hyperreal while maintaining a real weight.

For the recent Sight and Sound poll, Rajamouli was the only director who was cool enough to put Kung Fu Panda in his top ten. He brings this same fearlessness to his directing. R.R.R is a film unashamed to hold a slow-mo shot, to have over-the -top cartoonish villains and to choreograph elaborate dance sequences. Where else are you going to see a

man throw around a 200 kilo motorcycle like a mace? In an era of smug meta-self-consciousness, it feels great for a movie to be unafraid to be itself.

However, all this is just icing without a strong foundation and R.R.R provides this in its characters. While other action movies will skip straight to the spectacle, R.R.R takes time to develop its characters. The friendship between the two lead actors is organically developed over the course of the first hour and a half (the electric chemistry between Rama Rao and Ram Charan also helps in this regard). This is important because it gives meaning to the fight scenes. For example, the fight at the midpoint is not just pure spectacle, it's also a clash between two friends. This meaning allows for the action to avoid becoming white noise and means you can be emotional invested in the spectacle.

R.R.R is one of those once in a blue moon films, that reminds you of the magic of cinema as well as storytelling as a whole. I implore anyone to watch it, it's on Netflix so there is no excuse not to check it out.

"The story of being a dope fiend is that you could kill yourself real slow, but you feel like a million f***ing bucks doing it.":
# Cherry: a Review

by:**Bobbie-Jo Glendinning & Molly Bailey**

Cherry (Joe & Anthony Russo, 2021, Saudi Arabia) follows a PTSD and addiction-ridden protagonist (Tom Holland) through an episodic journey that involves six parts: Prologue (2007), Part One: When Life Was Beginning I Saw You; Part Two: Basic (2003); Part Three: Cherry; Part Four: Home (2005); Part Five: Dope Life; Epilogue. As he searches for purpose within his life, the protagonist falls into addiction and drug abuse as he spirals; all whilst corrupting his one true love Emily (Ciara Bravo). The films tackles the events of the Iraq War and the OxyContin epidemic in the USA during the early 2000s, speaking to the people who fell victim to pover-ty, enlistment, PTSD and addiction in the aftermath.

Cherry's representation of love is an interesting one. Arguably, it is the main theme at the center of the film; specifically between Cherry and Emily. In the begin-ning, we see an innocent-looking main character as he navigates the complexities of first love. The way in which the characters meet is realistic as they lock eyes in a University class. The way that love is represented as a whole, com-pared to this initial meeting, is something completely contradic-tory. Though the two go through
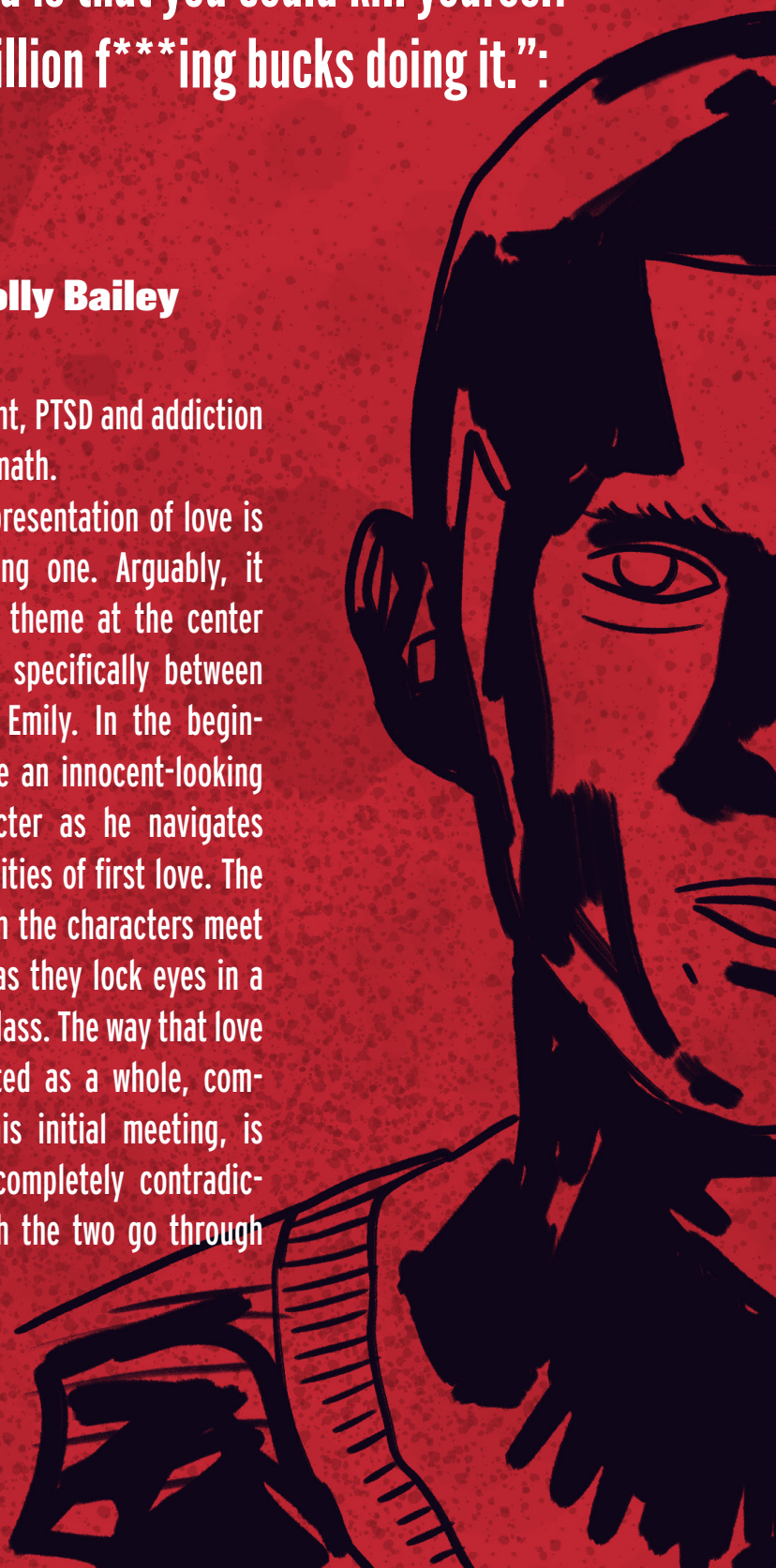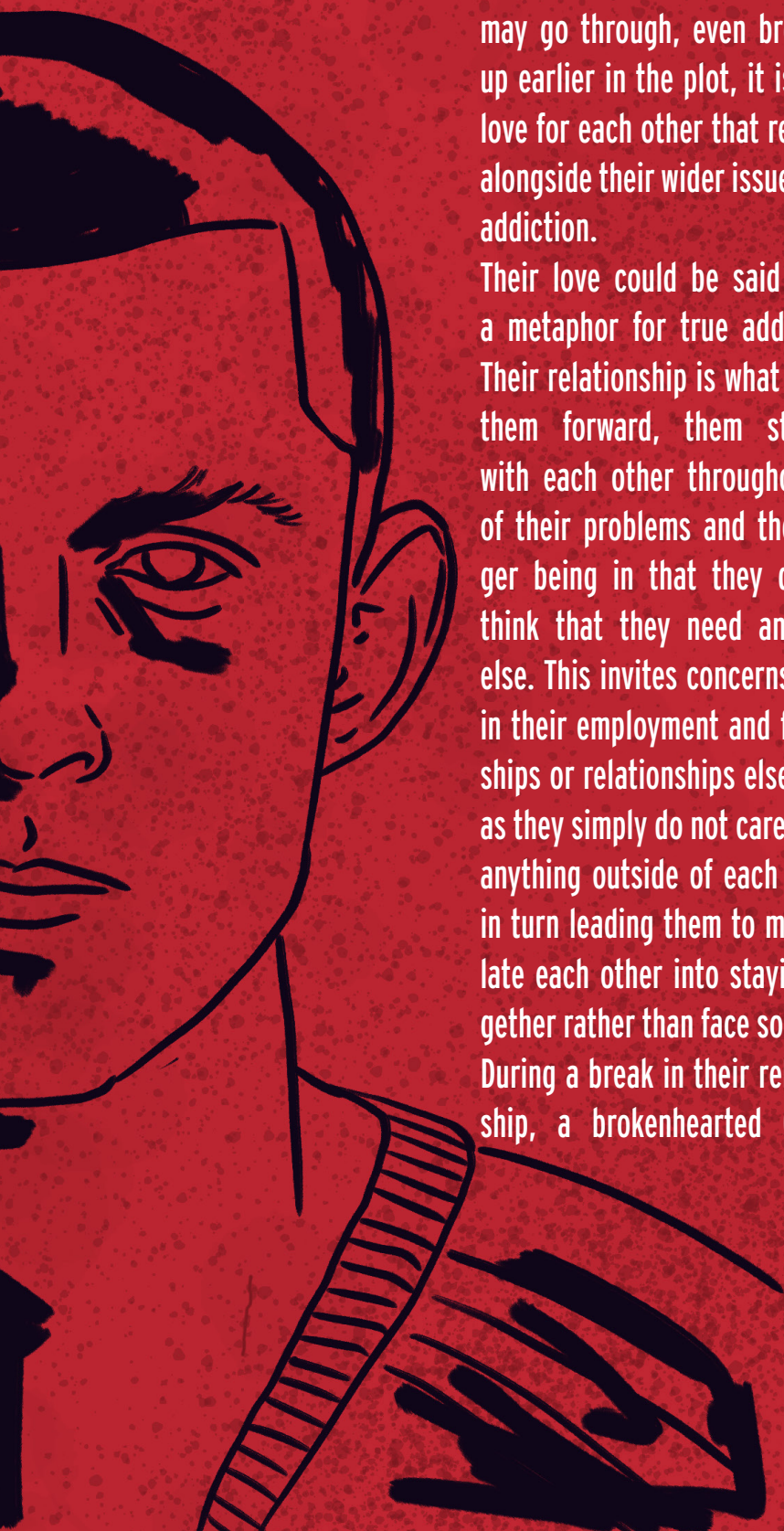
the normal issues that a couple may go through, even breaking up earlier in the plot, it is their love for each other that remains alongside their wider issues with addiction.

Their love could be said to be a metaphor for true addiction. Their relationship is what drives them forward, them sticking with each other throughout all of their problems and the danger being in that they do not think that they need anything else. This invites concerns within their employment and friendships or relationships elsewhere as they simply do not care about anything outside of each other; in turn leading them to manipulate each other into staying together rather than face sobriety. During a break in their relationship, a brokenhearted Cherry enlists into the Iraq War. The next two parts of the film capture Cherry's exhausting and destructive experience as a soldier. In a rather innovative and creative flare, the Russo Brothers give us a montage sequence of Cherry's basic training before he is sent into the field. These scenes reveal an ironic truth to general ambiguity in the history of the War between Iraq and America. This is portrayed through brutally honest voice-over dialogue, friendships lost to death and moments of comedic relief. Hindsight is 20/20 as script writer Angela Russo-Ostot (the Russo Brothers sister) ironically writes a line to the veterans of the past, who were manipulated to enlist, and to those in the present:

"Don't ever join the fucking army."

Arguably, the most technical and emotionally impactful scene is when we see Cherry's friends die. The scene is shot through the wing-mirror of the car Cherry is waiting in and takes the audience completely by surprise. The emo-

tional baggage underpinning this entire scene comes to a poignant head as we see Cherry collecting the bodies of his friends out of the wreckage and hear him say: "Shit, my gloves are melting... Sorry, Captain."

This scene perfectly captures the horrors of Cherry losing his friends at war. This could be said to be the catalyst for the addiction to come in the rest of the film as we see Cherry struggle through his survivor's guilt and how he turns to medication to control his PTSD. Returning from War, after being ribboned for being the only surviving member of his medic group, Cherry is thrust back into 'normal' life with Emily. As one beautifully symbolic chapter closes, another opens. What does Cherry gain from his two years of service? PTSD, anger problems and bad dreams. As Cherry struggles with the aftermath of his years at War, Emily must watch her husband spiral. The pair are faced with poverty, deteriorating mental health, and worst of all, a broken marriage. The coalescence of all these factors perfectly emanates the social realist aspect that makes Cherry genius.

Tom Holland masters the depiction of a returned, struggling War veteran of the USA in 2005, especially in the after effects. Consequently, Emily falls victim to Cherry's addiction as he projects his own coping mechanisms onto her with no regard for anyone else but himself. The film is exemplary in its approach to developing a complex and misunderstood main character. Coming back to the central notion of love, Cherry attempts to change his life but is ultimately failed by the system when his therapist, Dr. Whomever, prescribes him with the infamous OxyContin. With nowhere left to turn but medication, Emily's options are simple: follow or leave. Overall, Cherry is a brilliant film. It combines the gritty subject matter of a social realist film with the unavoidable reality of a war film. The implementation of Tom Holland outside of his normal 'superhero' role is something that everyone should and needs to see. He embodies Cherry perfectly with all his flaws and how they work with and against his love
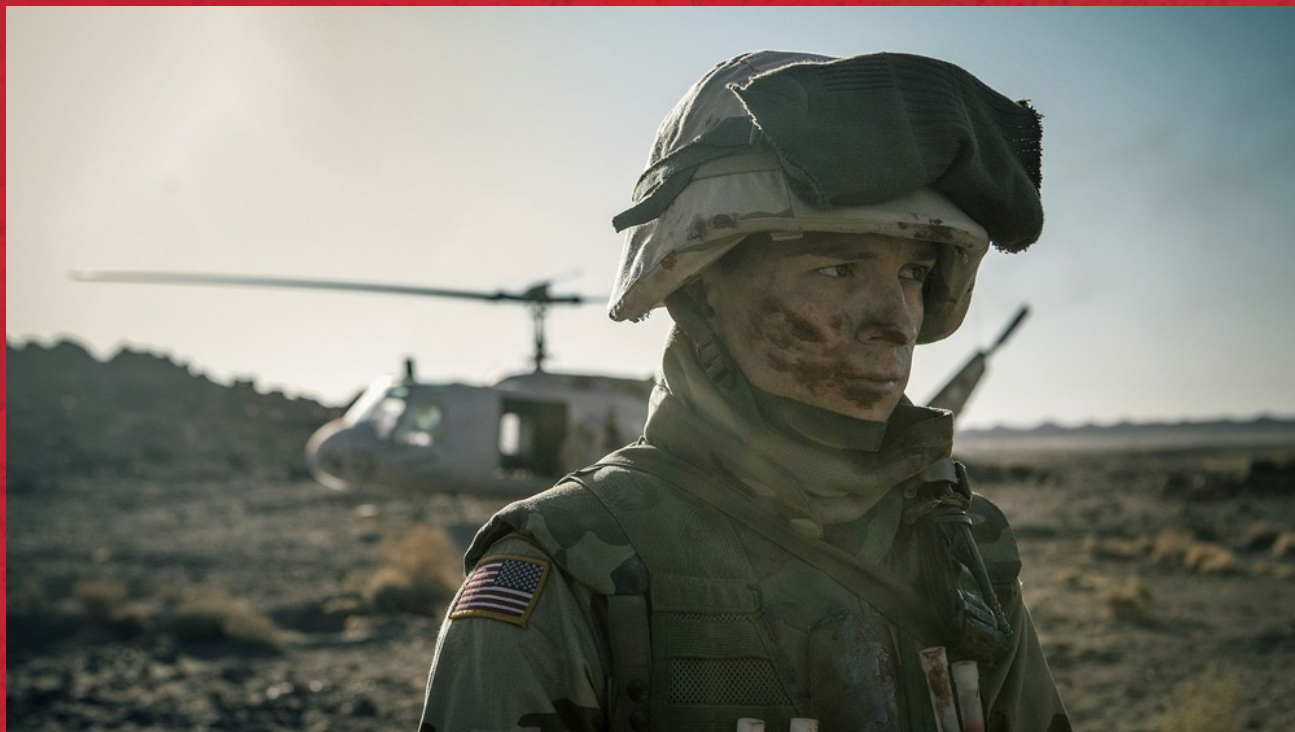
for Emily. How the film tackles such heavy themes whilst giving screen time and devoting the same amount of energy to each one is something to be admired. Ultimately, Cherry is the perfect balance between complex character development and interesting, dark subject matter whilst shining a self-reflective light on the horrors of addiction and PTSD.

REAGANITE IDEOLOGY IN TOP GUN
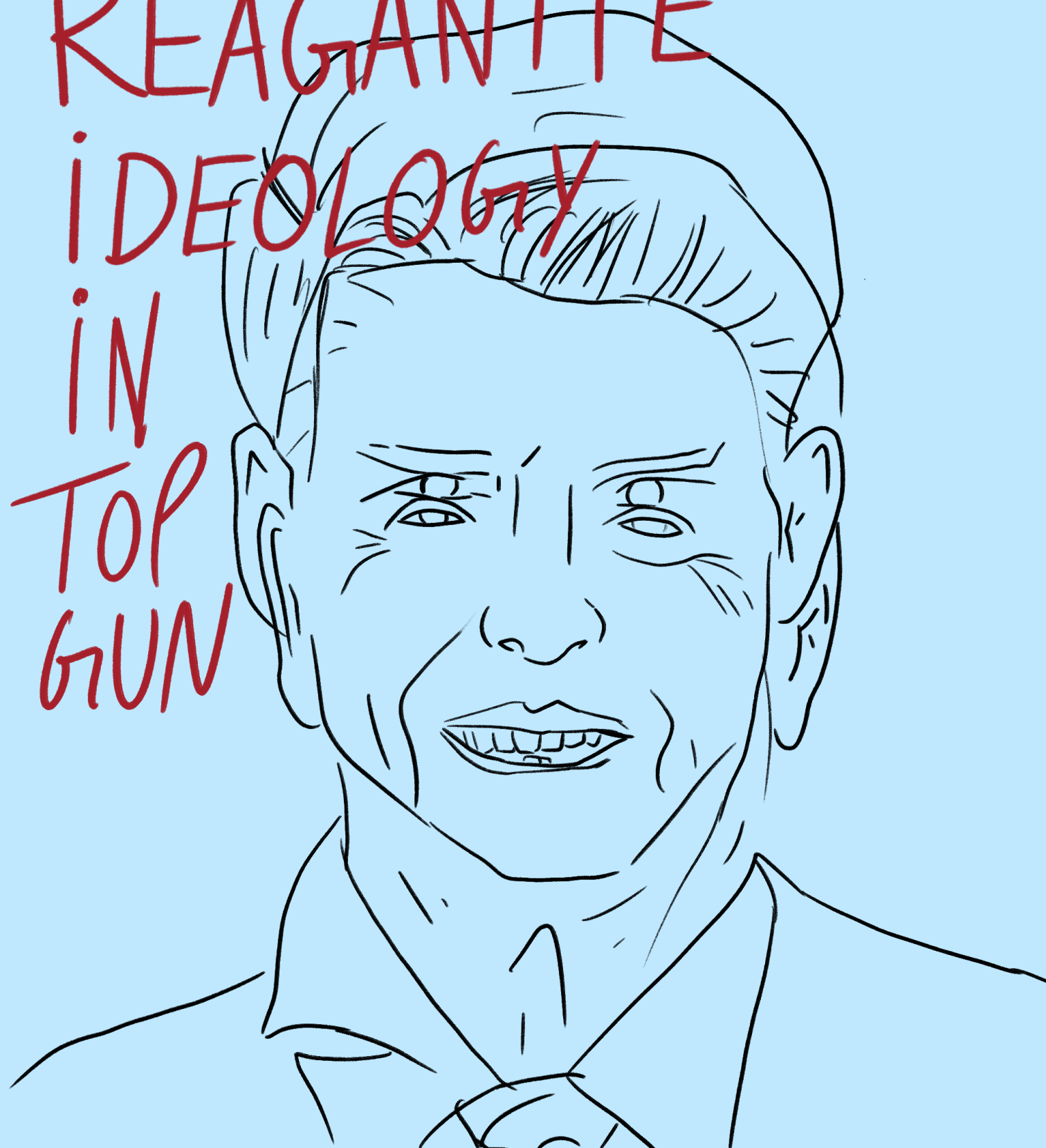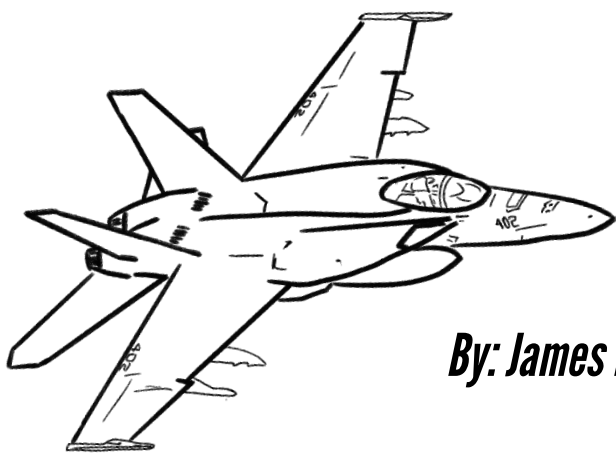
By: James Rist

Manola Dargis' observation that actor Tom Cruise possesses 'a mouth crammed with big white American teeth' builds a politically charged narrative about Top Gun (1986) and its success, drawing in mass appeal as the highest-grossing film of the year. Whether Cruise and the character of Maverick is the cinematic embodiment of the Ronald Reagan presidency (serving from 1981 to 1989) takes into account the context of mainstream Hollywood blockbusters of the time and war films that came before Top Gun's release.

Cruise's role as the main character and protagonist of the narrative means the preferred reading places the viewer in support of Maverick and his choices despite his reckless decisions portraying him as unruffled by figures of authority. Reagan's foreign policy was questioned at the time, with the controversial bombing of Libya taking place a month before the film's release. With the ongoing Cold War, the topical nature of world events may have been a significant factor in the film's success, with higher emotional engagement among the audience. Reagan's responses to trouble share similarities to Maverick's, as a man responding to a hazard on instinct, reacting to ensure a swift victory and to diffuse his enemies.

Cruise's status as a bankable star in the industry was starting to emerge leading up to the release of Top Gun. His acting career began in 1981, the same year as Reagan's inauguration, and blossomed in status through the release of The Outsiders (1983) and Risky Business (1983).

Top Gun played on the star power of Cruise as an 'All-American hero,' with the ability to overcome adversity through faith in his instincts. The character name 'Maverick' also conveys confidence in piloting, which is displayed in the opening scene. He is the composed figure in control of the situation, not flustered by the threat of enemy attack. In direct juxtaposition to Maverick, Cougar is unnerved and asks for the help of others in the position of crisis as the attack plane has him on a missile lock.

Maverick's attitude can be considered arrogant as he takes a photo of the enemy with an inverted plane. This scene displays his ability and possible naivety, demonstrating key character traits in the film's opening. The contrast of Cougar's tears shows weakness under pressure, outlining Maverick's superiority in battle and displaying his masculine characteristics of bravery. These traits align more fluidly with the conservative viewpoint of a logical male undisrupted by emotion.

Maverick is also more intuitive because he understands that the enemy aircraft was there to intimidate and not attack. This thought process applies to Ilias Ben Mna's 'themes of Reaganite rhetoric' within films including '(counter-)terrorism as war,' where the audience is made to feel aggravated by the threat of the enemy pilot and wants to see a reaction from Maverick.

Maverick's choice to ignore orders to land his jet to help a distressed Cougar demonstrates his independence from control. He is focusing on his moral obligations over orders from a higher-ranking official. His independence could align with the conservative, capitalist ideology of individualism over the communist collective. He is focused and driven by his decisions, rarely seeking help from others.

On the other hand, it could be argued that the decision to go back for Cougar is for the benefit of the collective unit he is a part of, ensuring and prioritising the safety of others before himself. Maverick's bravery and tactical prowess are the highlights of the scene, with the message of the skilled, young fighter as a strong demonstration of Reagan's military stance.

Cruise embodies the Reaganite ideas of pro-militarist agendas to coincide with the character's need for competition. When he is informed he and Goose will head to the Top Gun training school, we see his smile in the centre of the frame. The scene following this shows an animated Cruise cheering a jet taking off from the school, suggesting support for the tools of high-tech warfare.

Cruise's career and star persona has been characterised through his stunt work, including the scene of Cruise riding his motorcycle helmetless, emphasising this trademark of his filmography. The motorbike scene also acts as a staple of nationalist American pride, drawing similarities to the rebellious and nonconformist Peter Fonda in Easy Rider (1969). Cruise is the symbol of the untamed 'adrenaline junkie', demonstrating the excitement of the unknown and the danger that fulfils an audience's desire to escape the mundane.

The plot develops with the introduction of Kilmer's Iceman, the obstacle to Maverick's quest for the Top Gun trophy. It can be argued that Kilmer's role in the film is what Kellner theorises as 'the foreign other', an enemy of the nation. Kilmer has Swedish and German descent, and Iceman's surname is Kazansky, drawing Eastern European and even Soviet connotations that are further enforced through his archetypal blonde hair. The character is similar to Ivan Drago's in Rocky IV (1985), sharing a similar aesthetic of antagonism during the height of Reaganite cinema and further linking to Kellner's belief in the 'foreign other' antagonist.

The lifestyle displayed in the film Top Gun can be viewed as a highly aspirational depiction of the American way of life sold to the public for the Reagan campaign. With the rising inflation of the Carter presidency, Reagan ushered in new financial reforms known as Reaganomics. Top Gun's lack of class variety in its depictions of financially stable characters throughout could be viewed as a representation of public attitudes to the Reagan reforms.

Kellner states that Top Gun is 'the ascendency of a triumphant Reaganism at its last moment of supremacy', suggesting a glamorised depiction of this time. The life sold in Top Gun certainly portrays a high standard of living that is supposed to be aspirational to the viewer: Cruise rides a motorbike, and his love interest, Charlie, owns a Porsche sports car and a house on the coast from her work as a teacher at the school. It's also important to note that Goose, although financially stable, does not own lavish items. His character is the embodiment of the conventional, conservative nuclear family.

The idea of Cruise's smile and his 'big white American teeth' are the aspirational signifier of his confidence as a single man free from concern at the start of the film, attempting to win the attention of Charlie in the bar as he and Goose sing to her. In order to create mass appeal, the film includes a romantic element in the narrative to glamorise the life of a pilot. In the bar scene, Maverick refers to the bar full of women as a 'target-rich environment' before Cruise utilises his trademark smile.

In James Conlan's essay, Making Love, Not War, he makes the case that Top Gun is able to 'establish an identity between male courting and military combat'. Although this scene may not have many links to Reagan personally, the film makes the idea of military life appealing to the average spectator. Maverick's lifestyle of living on the edge and maintaining a healthy

social life doesn't conform to an audience's preconceived conceptions of the military.

The American people at the time of Top Gun's release in 1986 had an optimistic outlook, which is embodied in Cruise's on-screen persona as the self-assured pilot, Maverick. The film's perspective of looking at the pilots honing their skills gives a pro-militarist view of American attitudes to war. One that was reflected in Reagan's defence budget, which doubled come to the end of his presidency to over three hundred billion, according to the website MacroTrends.

The idea of a pro-militarist cinema was rarer in the seven-ties. For example, Michael Cimino's The Deer Hunter (1978) is a post-war film that reflected on the struggles of the working men and women that were affected. The film is much darker in tone compared to Top Gun, concluding with a disjointed set of characters ravaged by the aftermath of the Vietnam War. They sing 'God Bless America' in unison as they mourn the passing of their friend, Nick. In contrast, Top Gun concludes with a celebration of the bravery and skill of Maverick and Iceman as they form an alliance through their competitive nature and performances in battle.

The Deer Hunter was released in the post-recession USA, having been through an oil crisis five years prior, and was three

years removed from the end of the Vietnam War, which had cost over fifty thousand US deaths. Public attitudes to the military's intervention had loosened in the gap between the release of both films. Moreover, the inauguration of the Republican candidate, Reagan, saw a more patriotic and nationalist approach, utilising the slogan 'Let's make America great again'.

Top Gun manifests a pro-militarist stance through its soundtrack of Kenny Loggins', 'Danger Zone', an upbeat rock song that highlights the protagonist's anticipation for military engagement. On the other hand, The Deer Hunter's soundtrack of Pat Halling's 'Cavatina' uses strings to ensure a melancholic feel during the freeze-frame of the main characters raising a glass to their lost friend.

Despite focusing on different aspects of the military, the tonal divide between the two films mirrors the nation's attitude at the time of the film's release. Top Gun reflects Reaganism through Cruise's smile, connoting an eagerness for a battle that is not detected in De Niro and Walken's performance in The Deer Hunter. The volleyball scene displays this where the military is conveyed as the breeding ground for competition and masculine acts of warfare. In this scene, the character's biggest fear is losing to their opposition, where their ambition and need for victory propels their actions.

In Michael Loren Siegel's essay, Ride into the Danger Zone, he states, 'Top Gun is customarily seen as the near-perfect incarnation of Reagan-era ideologies surrounding masculinity, virility, and paternalistic nationalism'. This ideology differs significantly from The Deer Hunter, where the main characters are shells of their former selves, broken by the ravages of war, lacking any true sense of nationalist messaging.

Top Gun is a film that looks at the preparations for war with the underlying theme of showcasing what it takes to succeed,

whereas The Deer Hunter captured the zeitgeist of a nation that felt the shame of the failure of The Vietnam War. The argument can be made that the preparations and anticipation displayed in Top Gun employed a more positive attitude toward The Gulf War four years after the film's release.

Cruise's masculine persona, characterised by his 'big white American teeth', makes the character, Maverick, admirable to the average viewer. The rogue male protagonist is a convention of mainstream Hollywood cinema in the 1980s, with examples such as John Rambo in First Blood (1982), Jack Burton in Big Trouble in Little China (1986), and Axel Foley in Beverly Hills Cop (1984).

The 'Maverick' archetypal character was around prior to Cruise's role in Top Gun, having a skill set that makes them integral to their role yet also having a wit that adds to their charm and likeability. The wit can be seen in Top Gun with Maverick's pride in explaining his inverted photo of the enemy to Charlie as she explains that the plane is unable to perform 'a negative G pushover', a move that he and Goose achieved in the opening scene. Cruise's smile appears when he delivers his verdict that Charlie's data is inaccurate, which suggests that Maverick's piloting skills surpass the machine's capabilities.

Scott's direction creates Cruise's Maverick as the conventional rogue action star, with Goose stating, 'I've got a great polaroid of it,' providing evidence to upstage the competition and to make Maverick's actions appear impossible according to Charlie's logical scientific explanation.

When Cruise was asked why he did the negative G pushover, he gave an arrogant smile and replied, 'keeping up foreign relations'. These actions can be seen as mimicking Reagan's foreign policy of interrogating the enemy, suggesting a level of control he has over the situation. Maverick's quick, confident answers are a strong character trait that helps him escape

trouble. He is not flustered by Charlie's show-off and asserts his dominance as a pilot.

Maverick's disregard for Charlie's analysis of his manoeuvres continues later in the film as she and Viper believe that despite his success, he did not follow traditional techniques of combat flight. Cruise embodies the rogue, liberated pilot that relies on intuitive choices, which further backs the sentiment of the film having a slant toward Reaganite ideas of individualism.

Such an idea is heavily encapsulated in the line 'If you think, you're dead,' suggesting that Maverick has far more faith in himself over Charlie's verdict of the situation. Charlie represents a figure of authority that Maverick, the common man, feels he must overcome to stand out and succeed. Maverick, in this scene, embodies conservative values through his lack of trust in Charlie's authority as she attempts to regulate how he should fly with no real flight experience of her own.

In Tania Modleski's article, Teaching Top Gun, she points to this scene as an example where 'female authority (is) effectively undermined'. Although it can be argued that Maverick's viewpoint is misogynistic and does not give weight to her opinion as she is a woman, there is a stronger case that Maverick's lack of respect comes from her not being a pilot. The movie shows on multiple occasions that the idol figures of his life are those of former pilots such as Viper and his deceased father, as they are more battle-hardened than Charlie, acting as a stronger guide for his character arc.

Overall the film and its messaging, driven by Cruise's performance traits, are symbolic of the conservative ideals of the time. The characters are self-assured and living a life where their biggest concern is their dynamics with each other. The main conclusion to the plot is the message of teamwork to overcome the common American enemy. Dargis' statement of 'big white American teeth' represents American ideology at the time, with Top Gun symbolic of patriotic attitudes tied to Reagan's presidency just as much as Cruise's smile.

Filmography

Top Gun. (1986).
The Outsiders. (1983).
Risky Business. (1983).
Easy Rider. (1969).
Rocky IV. (1985).
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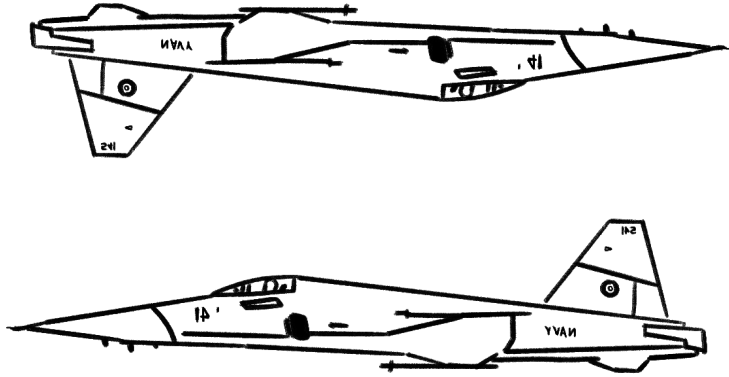
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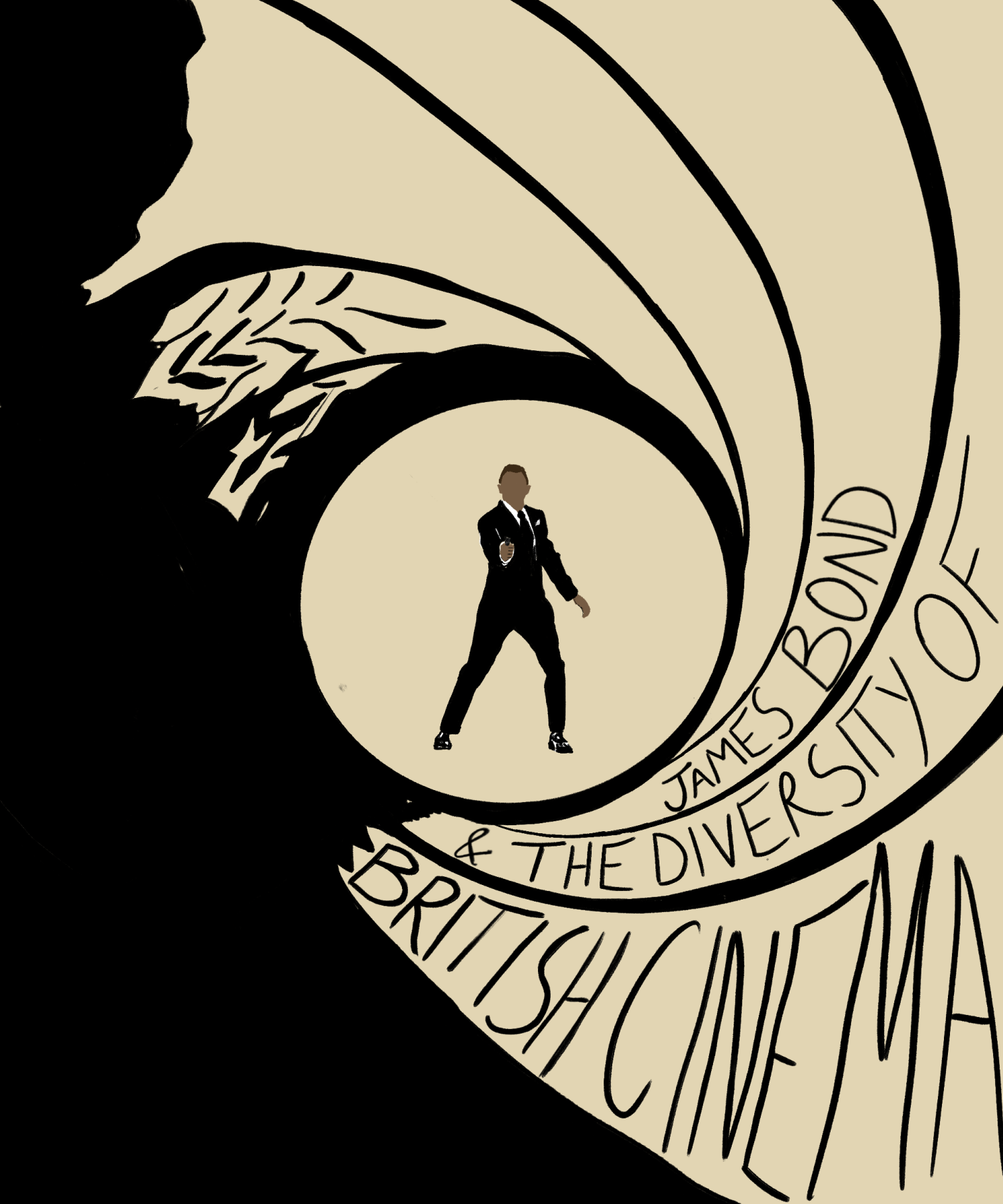
JAMES BOND & THE DIVERSITY OF BRITISH CINEMA

By: James Rist

Film theorist Andrew Higson's observations of British Cinema coincide with the study of film history, suggesting an intrigue in understanding the evolution involved in British films and their development. For Higson to 'celebrate the cinema of diversity', there must be a transition within British cinema from one film to the next. Even if the genre remains the same, the plots and styles of the films go through a shift.

The James Bond franchise has been a major staple of British cinema, rotating actors and directors whilst maintaining an iconography unique to the franchise. The recognisable symbols of James Bond allow it to maintain its relevance after twenty-five films, with six different actors portraying the character in varied performative styles. To understand Higson's desires for diversity, the timeline of the James Bond franchise allows for a deeper understanding of cultural, thematic, and stylistic shifts, moving from Sean Connery to Pierce Brosnan and, most recently, Daniel Craig. The films that will be analysed in depth, You Only Live Twice (Gilbert, 1967), Die Another Day (Tamahori, 2002), and Casino Royale (Campbell, 2006), convey the developments and tonal shifts that allowed for a high degree of diversity in a franchise that could have easily become formulaic had it not adapted its audience's expectations.

The fifth film in the franchise, You Only Live Twice, is stylistically a diverse piece of British cinema. The most vital contributor to the film's visuals outside of the director Lewis Gilbert was the film's production designer Ken Adam, creating sets that would heighten the action on-screen whilst also maintaining relevance to the conventions of prior films in the franchise.

Adam had already been involved in the production of Bond film's starting with Dr. No (Young, 1962), then Goldfinger (Hamilton, 1964) and Thunderball (Young, 1965) before You Only Live Twice. He also worked on Kubrick's Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (Kubrick, 1964). Dr. Strangelove was made at Pinewood Studios, the same as where the Bond films were. It was highly commended for its stylistic traits due to Adam's creation of 'The War Room'. The set forms juxtaposition in the absurdity of the dialogue by confining the characters to a setting integral to pinning the threat of nuclear war in the plot.

The opening scene of You Only Live Twice utilises the setting of space travel, which is thematically and stylistically crucial to 1960s cinema. The plot also has a similar tendency, involving a divide between US and Soviet relations, requiring the services of British intelligence and protagonist James Bond.

Stylistically, this scene indicates the experimental use of props and setting within British cinema and even the James Bond franchise, which would later play on the ideas of space travel more with Moonraker (Gilbert, 1979).

The choice of the setting of Japan was a first for the franchise, allowing for more visually creative diversity in Tokyo, especially with its nightlife and lighting. It was showcased in the film's early scenes where Bond is being followed. On the other hand, Bond is conventionally cool within this backdrop, acting as a 'cultural chameleon' by throwing a phrasebook back at Moneypenny in an earlier scene. Adam's dynamic set design adds an extra layer of threat to the setting as Bond chases Aki through the underground before stopping as she waits for him to fall through the trap door, sliding down to Tiger's office. A set that Adam looks back fondly on and refers to in an interview with Sir Christopher Frayling, 'Today you would call it a minimalist set', signifying his approach to the film's stylistic qualities and aesthetic as measured and precise in creating a valuable tone for the film.

The elaborate nature of these shifts in setting creates world-building that is unpredictable and diversifies the franchise into having commendable stylistic traits. Adam is able to create a set that juxtaposes scenes shot on location in the streets of Tokyo with the criminal underworld antagonism that Bond must overcome in the narrative.

When asked about his influences for the Bond look that he created, Adam states, 'If I really think back on influences, possibly German Expressionism, in films like The Cabinet of Dr
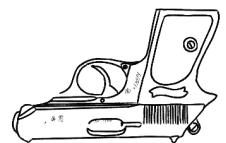
Caligari (Weine, 1920), has been a strong influence on me'. You Only Live Twice is stylistically diverse by interpreting cinematic movements that came before it and echoing Higson's 'cinema of diversity'.

Adam's unique style is integral to the foundations of British cinema's strongest franchises. It creates a visual aesthetic that 'alerts us to the diversity of British Cinema' whilst utilising contrasts and set designs that are more prominent in prior cinematic waves. The stylistic qualities of the film are further developed in Blofeld's volcano base, using the prop of a rocket in the centre of the frame to underscore the threat of advanced military warfare, coinciding with an army of henchmen.

The volcano base was the most expensive freestanding set in the recorded history of cinema at the time, adding to the grandeur of the achievement of its production for the British film industry. The diversity involved in the scale of its creation is the reason for its notoriety within the franchise.

In Adam's interview with Frayling for Ken Adam and the Art of Production Design, he stated, 'some people said we could have done it in model form. And yes, I suppose I could. But we could not have had four hundred stunt men abseiling down a model.' Adam here is conveying how the spectacle of the set works with the stunt work to create an ambitious and memorable scene. This dedication to quality production is something Higson would celebrate as a part of the diverse culture of British cinema, which influenced future Bond titles.

Stylistically, You Only Live Twice's influence can be seen in Pierce Brosnan's final role as James Bond in Die Another Day. The film shares some similarities with the craft of its set design. However, it was heavily criticised at the time, with a quote from former Bond Roger Moore voicing displeasure at the film's aesthetic with 'Invisible cars and dodgy CGI footage? Please!' suggesting that certain advancements in the filmmaking process were not always well received.

The opening title sequence shows a shift in the tone of the two films, with Madonna's pop electric track of 'Die Another Day' in stark contrast to the melancholy of 'You Only Live Twice' performed by Nancy Sinatra. Die Another Day's title sequence underlines the difference in stylistic qualities between the two with its heavy use of CGI overlapping the frame of a captured and tortured Bond. The icy female figure next to Bond acts as a foreshadowing metaphor for the plot twist of Miranda Frost's betrayal in the third act.

Bond's stylistic blend into his surroundings is similar to the Japanese setting of You Only Live Twice, heading to Cuba in search of Zao. The stylistic choice of Bond's costume with his open Hawaiian shirt, cigar, and 1957 Ford Fairlane Convertible create a similar depiction as Connery's Bond as a protagonist that has blended into the culture of his surroundings to succeed in his mission.

Die Another Day stylistically alludes to Adam's work on previous Bond titles, with Gustav Grave's Icelandic ice palace sharing strong similarities to Blofeld's volcano base. The franchise creates a strong case that the films promote technical creativity concerning aesthetics and set design, despite the stereotyped conventions that 'Bond film' directors and set designers feel obliged to adhere to.

The conventions were most likely known to producers due to the success of the third and final instalment of the James Bond parody Austin Powers in Goldmember (Roach, 2002). The film was released in the same year as Die Another Day, using Bond conventions, including stylistic choices to be comedic.

The film's stylistic and visual allusions to previous Bond films add to Higson's idea of diversity within British cinema by reimaging works of the past. When Bond fights Mr Kil to save Jinx, the set design and use of lasers pay homage to Adam's work on Goldfinger. The scene offers viewers nostalgia for previous Bond films whilst also developing a contemporised version of the character through Brosnan's charming and witty portrayal of the role.

Thematically, You Only Live Twice befits the era of its release whilst also adding diverse elements to characterise the future of British cinema. As previously mentioned, the film embodies the animosity of the Cold War and foreign relations of the time. At the beginning of the film, there is an immediate accusation by the US that Russia sent the spacecraft. The film presents Britain as the rational devil's advocate in this scene that will send their best man for the job in Bond.

The British depiction of its foreign policy and relations in the film can arguably be viewed as a biased and glamourised depiction of British espionage and intelligence with a British cinema leaning of nationalist pride. Connery's depiction of Bond further enforces such pride, being the cool and calculated maverick who is reliable under the threat of an enemy attacker.

Bond's physical altercations, as seen in Die Another Day, were first made convention through Connery as he fights with the far larger driver in Osato's office. The thematic

creation of the 'plucky British underdog' is played on with Bond, as the size difference between the two conveys him as under threat. Bond winning despite being the underdog proves he is more skilled in hand-to-hand combat.

The franchise often uses this within Bond's conflicts against antagonists. However, the archetype of 'British pluck' can arguably come under question despite Bond often being physically smaller than his enemies. His intuitiveness and cunning mean he will get the better of his opposition.

This idea is explored by Phillips O'Brian in 'the myth of the plucky Brit' when speaking of British war films where he claims, 'the more an event relied on daring or excitement, the less important or even counterproductive it was in determining the course of the Second World War'. This is an interesting point when applied to Higson's 'cinema of diversity' as You Only Live Twice creates a fantastical depiction of British espionage that depicts Bond to be a near-perfect protagonist figure for audiences to cling to.

You Only Live Twice heightens moments of 'daring' and 'excitement' by having Bond fight more imposing mental figures such as Blofeld later on in the film. Blofeld's army of henchmen creates an unrealistic depiction of infiltrating an enemy base, but it is a far more entertaining spectacle for viewers.

The film is more closely related to British military practice due to Bond's faked death,

a move that is similar to a war tactic brought up by O'Brian where the body of a homeless man was dressed as a British officer with fake documents, known as Operation Mincemeat.

The diversity of British cinema is on full display as the film straddles the line between creative reality and fiction with Bond's faked death and attack on Blofeld's hideout. The idea of Bond being a near-perfect protagonist throughout the franchise is evaluated in this film as he is trained to learn Japanese combat techniques to improve himself as a spy.

Thematically, there is a shift within the franchise from You Only Live Twice to Casino Royale, which can be seen in each film's introduction to Bond. Daniel Craig's first feature as the character utilises chiaroscuro lighting to shroud the character in darkness, symbolic of a modern, gritty transition for the character as he earns his 007 status. In contrast, Connery is introduced lying in bed with a woman and later shown wearing his commander uniform, conveying him as a well-established figure that understands his role.

Casino Royale is a film that sets out a thematic genre change to an action thriller with Bond chasing Mollaka through a construction site, defying convention by running through a wall to remain in pursuit. Craig's Bond diversifies the franchise by introducing Bond as a stronger and more physical on-screen presence than his predecessors, Brosnan and Connery.

Later in the scene, Craig has a gun with no ammo and throws it at Mollaka, suggesting a higher level of aggression than prior Bonds.

Lisa Funnel states, 'Casino Royale's graphic violence and dark tone have helped to distance James Bond from the campy persona made famous by his predecessor.' She suggests a shift in conventional Bond themes, which have become thematically diverse.

The film diversifying its themes and tropes continues with Bond exiting the water in swimming trunks as he watches Solange dismount from her horse. The scene is unique for juxtaposing similar scenes in previous Bond films, such as Connery waiting on the beach for Honey Rider as she exits the water in Dr. No. Here, Casino Royale foregoes the traditional use of Mulvey's 'Male gaze' with 'women as image and men as a bearer of the look' to create a more diverse thematic viewing for pre-sold audience members are familiar with the usual voyeur shot of the 'Bond girl'.

Higson's study of 'film history' is crucial in understanding the importance of these thematic tweaks for the franchise as Casino Royale separates itself from Die Another Day which has a similar scene of Jinx emerging from the water as Bond stands on the shore with a pair of binoculars.

There is another thematic diversion within Casino Royale and the antagonist Le Chiffre. The character is not dramatised by his surroundings with an evil base like Blofeld or Graves. His menace is formed primarily through his intimidation of Bond during the poker game. There is the visual theme of the scarring to his eye, but Le Chiffre does not embody one nation as an axis threat. He is a terrorist that

makes money through shorting stocks rather than having an exaggerated master plan for world domination, as seen in previous films.

Despite falling into some pitfalls of formulaic narrative and visuals, the James Bond franchise has created a platform of diversity for British cinema due to its historical and cultural significance and steady transitions over time. Higson's desire to 'celebrate the cinema of diversity' is met with these films as their stylistic integrity, along with shifts of narrative and plot, create diversity within British cinema that has been celebrated since the franchise's inception.

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Filmography

You Only Live Twice (Gilbert, 1967)
Die Another Day (Tamahori, 2002)
Casino Royale (Campbell, 2006)
Dr. No (Young, 1962)
Goldfinger (Hamilton, 1964)
Thunderball (Young, 1965)
Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (Kubrick, 1964)
Moonraker (Gilbert, 1979)
The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (Wiene, 1920)
Austin Powers in Goldmember (Roach, 2002)
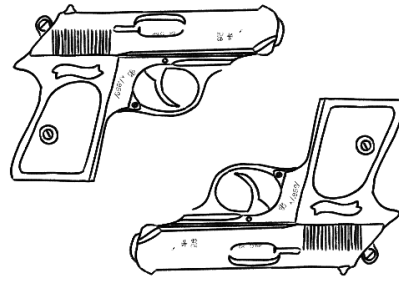
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Ranking Films from
my Favourite Filmmaker

CHARLIE
KAUFMAN

By: Sky Fong

Charlie Kaufman, who you might know best as the script-writer for Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind (Michel Gondry, 2004), is a master in script writing and directing. There is no doubt that he is one of the greatest working writer-directors. Kaufman is, by far, my favourite filmmaker, with some of his films being all-timers for me. This article will go through six of Kaufman's works and rank them based on my personal opinion:

NO. 6

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind (Michel Gondry, 2004)
You might be surprised that Eternal Sunshine is at the bottom of the list, as Kaufman is probably best known to the general audience from this film. It also earned Kaufman his Oscar for Best Original Screenplay. The film is Kaufman and Gondry's second collaboration following Human Nature (Gondry, 2001). I do not dislike Eternal Sunshine, and it is still some solid work from both Kaufman and Gondry. However, this falls short for me compared to his other works and collaborations.

Eternal Sunshine follows Joel Barish (Jim Carey), who encounters Clementine (Kate Winslet) on the train on Valentine's Day. Joel and Clementine are instantly drawn to each other, and a history between them starts to reveal itself. The plot feels a bit safe for Charlie Kaufman, despite its themes of memory and science fiction elements. It lingers with melodramatic beats and drags on with unnecessary and cliche subplots. Philosophical messages often layered in other Kaufman's scripts stay only on a surface level in Eternal Sunshine.

It is a mediocre script with average execution. Maybe it's my vendetta against melodrama, but I don't see it as a masterpiece like many others do.

NO. 5

Adaptation. (Spike Jonze, 2002)
Now, this is what you call a script. Kaufman and Spike Jonze's follow-up to their ground-breaking collaboration Being John Malkovich (Spike Jonze, 1999). Adaptation, is an audacious film about Charlie Kaufman himself trying to adapt an unadaptable book(Susan Orlean's The Orchid Thief). The script is meta, self-aware, and (rightfully so) self-indulgent. It weaves two stories seamlessly, eventually connecting them in a thrilling finale. One is the story of Susan Orlean writing the book, and the other is Kaufman's experience as he is adapting the book.

Adaptation is a masterful exercise in how you can play around with a script. Kaufman himself plays as two contrasting script writers fighting against each other, which in the film is portrayed by Nic Cage going against Nic Cage. The storytelling is completely reconfigured under Kaufman's genius. It is inspiring to see a movie about writing a script as a writer myself.

The film comments on how studios and the general audience seek thrills and excitement in entertainment and how these desires often lead to sacrifices in artistic integrity. How Kaufman makes a fragmented and stylistically off-putting script work, is a masterclass in writing.

The writing is also supported by Jonze's direction and the fantastic performances by Nic Cage, Meryl Streep and Chris Cooper.

NO. 4

Anomalisa (Charlie Kaufman and Duke Johnson, 2015)
First written as a sound play, then reinvented into a stop-motion feature film, Anomalisa is one of the most existential animated films I have seen. It follows customer service expert Michael Stone (voiced by David Thewlis), who navigates a world where everyone has the same voice except Lisa.

It's mad how disgusting an animated character can be under Kaufman's writing and direction. Michael Stone is the person you follow in the film, he is an unlikeable character through and through, and his relationship with Lisa is unnerving to the audience.

After I watched Anomalisa, I spent three hours thinking about it. It is so thematically dense, it makes you question what it means to be human and what makes everyone different.

It has a strong sense of self-awareness where the script questions the moral position of Kaufman himself, whether his portrayal of these people working in customer service as monotonous is pretentious. Kaufman is partly in a similar position as Michael, who sees other people as boring, but is unaware of his ego and self-indulgence.

Animation is not a genre exclusively for children, it's simply another storytelling medium and seeing an animated film with such a focus on adult themes is entrancing.

NO. 3

Being John Malkovich (Spike Jonze, 1999)
Kaufman's first screenwriting credit and Jonze's directorial debut. This film has so much audacious innovation that it solidified both of these creative giants' careers. Absurd things happen in this story and no one cares. You can call them plot holes, but they are all intentional in crafting a unique and distinct fantasy.

Being John Malkovich follows puppeteer Craig who finds a portal into John Malkovich's head. It's about the human desire to become someone other than themselves, the selfish desire to control, and even the queer desire to be a person of a different gender. It is about the dysmorphia one experiences with themselves.

Spike Jonze perfectly utilised Kaufman's script and made the wildest things possible on the screen. The comedic beats and the existential drama are balanced in such a brilliant way. The manipulation of multiple types of art, from puppeteering, to fake documentaries, to even a textbook, creates a dynamic display of their vision. Jonze and Kaufman's genius minds are fully displayed in their first feature, and I'm simply in awe.

NO. 2

Synecdoche, New York (Charlie Kaufman, 2008)
I present one of my favourite films of all time – Charlie Kaufman's directorial debut, Synecdoche, New York (2008). The film is regarded as the best movie of the 2000s by film critic Roger Ebert.

This film is a culmination of his writing credits: the idea of becoming and replacing someone else in Being John Malkovich; the meta self-awareness of a writer writing about their creative process in Adaptation.; the melancholic exploration of time and memory in Eternal Sunshine. With all of these elements combined, you get a beast of a film.

Philip Seymour Hoffman gives one of the best performances of all time as Caden Cotard, a theatre director attempting to recreate life through an experimental project in a warehouse. Synecdoche is about all of life and death, how Caden's attempt at realism only leads to more and more surreal happenings. It reflects the surreal elements in life. The film can also be viewed as an evaluation of a god-like figure, how the god is as trapped as the men they control.

It is an incredibly layered and experimental film that pushes what film is to its boundaries. An Absolute masterpiece is delivered in Kaufman's directorial debut.

NO. 1

I'm Thinking of Ending Things (Charlie Kaufman, 2020)
Still currently my favourite film of all time, I'm Thinking of

Ending Things is a genius film that follows Jake, bringing his girlfriend home to visit his parents. Everything clicks for me, it is bizarre and surreal in the best possible way. Its intertextuality lies so profoundly in its construction. I feel dumb and in awe of it at the same time. The way poems, musicals, film criticism, and so many forms of art are incorporated into this film is magnificent.

After reading the book, my admiration for this film is elevated even more. Kaufman reimagined a book with so many experimental elements into a film that pushes the possibilities of the film genre. Kaufman's direction has never been stronger. He tightened the film's look perfectly, especially with the production design.

I am an absolute sucker for a surrealist dance sequence, and the one in I'm Thinking of Ending Things is one of the best ones I have ever seen. A dream sequence that is so earned and elevated the film to its climax. The pacing to the general audience might be too slow, but I am all for it. It suits the film's tone, especially the beginning car conversation. It is slow but never dull.

It is so existential that I will love it more and more as I grow older. How age has impacted one's life and how much regret one has due to ageing is fascinating to see on the screen. It's the "genus" of Kaufman that constructed this film that I thoroughly adore from beginning to end.

Charlie Kaufman is an artistic genius of our generation. I deeply admire and am heavily inspired by Kaufman and his works. I hope this article will prompt you to check out his films with an open mind, and I hope you will love them as much as I do.

SOMETHING TO DO WITH LIFE

By: João Belchior

To my two homonyms, who stare at me across Sad Hill, and with whom I always share the Silver Screen.

Before starting this article, it is important to define the term: favourite. There are two types of favourites when it comes to cinema: firstly, there are favourite films, which upon meeting someone, especially those interested in film such as myself, are, normally, ready-made answers – perhaps formed long ago and often not put into question. Secondly, there are the favourite films. This distinction, so personal and subjective that might render it futile, refers to films that are both stubborn and transcending. Stubborn: in the way they find ways to return to our lives, and transcending: not by the themes or characters they portray, but by the emotional punch they throw.

When I think of my favourite films, only two come to mind. The first, The Good the Bad, and The Ugly (Leone, 1966), an epic Western that follows three characters looking for $200,000 in gold coins: Tuco, a Mexican outlaw (Ellie Wallach), 'Blondie' a bounty hunter (Clint Eastwood) and 'Angel-Eyes', a hired and feared gunman (Lee Van Cleef). Having the American Civil War as a backdrop, or what Christopher Frayling describes as a "bloody and dangerous distraction" (Frayling, 2005, pg. 50), this film is ultimately about greed and human relations. The first, The Good the Bad, and The Ugly is the third of The Dollars Trilogy and is where we first see Sergio Leone in his splendour as a filmmaker and amateur. Aside from the formalism in his style of filmmaking, The Good the Bad, and The Ugly evidences how Leone is more than a lover of the Western genre. He is a connoisseur, he knows the tropes of the genre, though doesn't use them as a form of reproducing a copy, but of offering critique. It is a form of "cinema about cinema' –

but one with the potential to 'comment' as well" (Frayling, 1981).

The second, also a Western by Sergio Leone, is a film that was not love at first sight, but one that grew on me with time, and one I find myself coming back to repeatedly. Once Upon a Time in the West (1968) is Leone's most structurally and narratively complex Western and tells the story of the arrival of 'civilization' to the pastoral American West, simultaneously depicting what Leone termed as a "dance of death" (Leone, 2000, pg. 254). Leone "borrowed" (ibid.) five stereotypical characters of the American West and cut them loose for almost three hours in the Italian West. These include a recently widowed prostitute, Jill (Claudia Cardinale), a bandit in search of clearing his name, Cheyenne (Jason Robards Sr.), a railroad baron with a dream that outsizes him, Morton (Gabriele Ferzetti), a ruthless gunman with business aspirations, Frank (Henry Fonda), and a lone ranger in search of revenge, Harmonica (Charles Bronson). Despite being entirely different characters, each recognises that physically or psychologically they are going to die.

Both films are magnum-opus of the Spaghetti Western genre and had a great impact in revitalising the genre, in a moment of struggle and decline. In this article, I will focus on how this rebirth of the genre made these films great generational bridges, and how they work both stubbornly and transcendingly to personally connect me to both my father and my grandfather.

The first memory I have of The Good the Bad and the Ugly goes back to my childhood. Weekends as a kid were al-

ways great fun - they brought schooling to a halt and got the family together for Sunday lunches. Before or after the meal at my grandparent's old place, I would find myself roaming between the office and the upstairs loft. The office was a small room next to the kitchen with three walls covered with bookshelves and one massive window to the garden; the loft, on the other hand, was a dusty space on the upper floor. There laid my aunt's drawing table, a sofa, an old computer, and more full shelves. Both these places were filled with all sorts of things: souvenirs from my grandparent's travels, books, records, CDs, and ultimately a great (but also scattered) DVD collection.

Until my grandmother moved out, after my grandfather's passing, I spent hours at a time just looking through these random objects, scavenging through all those titles, all those stories, immersing myself in these imaginary worlds. It was in one of these expeditions, when I was about eight or nine, that I came across the DVD of O Bom, o Mau, e o Vilão, (the Portuguese title for which I knew the film for most of my life). I was immediately intrigued. Across the cover, Clint Eastwood in his I-don't-care poncho, smoking his you-can't-touch-me cigar. I'm sure my dad told me all about that film then, but the truth is that until quite recently, I had no clue what it was about. No concrete idea who Sergio Leone was, and even after several explanations, I still couldn't understand why on Earth someone would call a film genre Spaghetti.

It took me a few years to fathom it, but I believe I've finally reached a concrete understanding (believe it or not, it doesn't have anything to do with food). The Spaghetti Westerns (preferably referred to as Western all'Italiana) are a subgenre of Western films made by Italian filmmakers. The most famous examples were made during the second half of the 1960s and the first of the 1970s and are characterised by how they replaced the expensive American West with the cheap Spanish South (in order to stay within the films' low budgets). The ground-breaking soundtrack of the Italian Westerns replaces the classical music of the American Frontier with distorted electric guitars, whistling, and the cracking of whips. The Italian films are grittier and less morally accountable, often portraying anti-heroes that blurred the clear lines of good/evil of the

Classical American Western. Besides this, these films made the West bloodier and extremely violent. As Cheyenne puts it at the end of Once Upon a Time in the West, the characters of these films had "something inside. Something to do with Death". This overwhelming sense of violence continues to unite people from all over the world around the screen, and perhaps, the film we owe this to is the first successful Western all'Italiana.

When, in 1964, Sergio Leone released A Fistful of Dollars, my grandfather was twenty years old. This was the year in which he went to the cinema for the first time whilst both the American and the Italian film Industry were in crisis. In Hollywood, the heroic cowboy and its ideology, which populated the American Screens for a bit over five decades, started being opted out of by audiences who, according to Pauline Kael, knew that a 'great western' now had come to mean "slow and pictorially composed." (Kael, 1981, pg. 39). In Italy, however, the problem differed. The structure of Italian Cinema had always been different to that of Hollywood. In Italy, a hit and-trigger structure was in place, or as Fisher describes, a "rapid repetition and imitation of successful formulae" (Fisher, 2011, p. 36) in which the Italians called the filone, meaning 'tradition' and 'vein', but also 'thread'. This meant the success of a film would trigger the studios to make similar films exploiting the film's genre to the bone (that is until audiences got tired and a new hit was needed). By the end of the 1950s/beginning of the 1960s, Italian moviegoers were tired of the sword-and-sandal epics that had been dominating the Italian cinematic landscape, creating an opening for a new hit.

It is then, in that year of 1964, that Sergio Leone gave the audience, and the industry, the latest filone phenomenon – the Spaghetti Westerns. Italian Western films go as far back as 1913, with La Vampira Indiana by Roberto Rober-

ti, however, the true hit came only in 1964, when Sergio Leone directed the aforementioned, A Fistful of Dollars which triggered a boom in the film industry. From 1964 to 1973 approximately 500 westerns were produced in Italy (Gandhi, n.d.). Contrastingly, in America from 1958 to 1963, the annual production of Western films dropped from 54 to merely 11 films (Bondanella, p. 253). In this way, the Spaghetti Western, came to revitalise a dormant genre, bridging the European generation who had grown with the classical westerns and the generations that followed it.

However important, this bridging doesn't answer one of the most important questions when it comes to Spaghetti Westerns: Why did a genre about the American frontier work so well in a country without cowboys, without pistoleros and without the West?

Italian critic Alberto Moravia explains it best in his review of Il Buono, il Brutto, il Cattivo for L'Espresso in January of 1967: "The Italian Western was born not from ancestral memory but from the herd instinct of filmmakers who, when young, were head over heels in love with the American western. In other words, the Hollywood Western was born from a myth; the Italian one is born from a myth about a myth". One of the directors which was hooked by this film genre and helped rebuild the frontiers of western filmmaking was Sergio Leone, however, his relationship to the genre went beyond this generalised cinephilic relationship with the American Western. Leone's path towards the creation of The Dollars Trilogy (and later on Once Upon a Time in the West and A Fistful of Dynamite) was quasi-prophetic, as the Western ran in his veins.

For several reasons, people related to the arts in Italy often found the need to seek refuge (or comfort) under a stage name. Directors did it a lot, including Sergio Leone – who believed that an American-sounding name, mixed with those

of American actors, would confuse the Italian moviegoers into believing the film to be American (and hence making more money at the box office). This way, when A Fistful of Dollars came out posters could read "Clint Eastwood in / Per un Pugno di Dollari / Regia di Bob Robertson". The name, which held significant importance, was short-lasted, though it is worth noting that Sergio Leone's father, Vincenzo Leone (who was also an actor, screenwriter and director) also adopted a stage name, however for different reasons. Vincenzo's family believed he was in Turin studying to be a barrister, yet he had actually joined a touring theatre company, meaning Vincenzo needed to pursue his artistic endeavours under a different name (Frayling, 2000, pg. 26). When Vincenzo starred in his first film, the credits would then read the name, Roberto Roberti. The director of the first Italian Western was the father of the man who put Italian Westerns on the map – for the Leone's too, the western all'Italiana was a generational bridge.

Because of the poor film distribution systems (and the overall lack of cinemas) in rural Portugal until the late twentieth century, I believe my great-grandfather never went to the cinema, and therefore, unlike the Leone's, my grandfather was never able to build this kind of cinematic bridge with his father. However, I believe that the years my grandfather spent at university, where he went to the cinema with great regularity, were the setting stones for the solid bridges between him, my dad, and myself.

Contrary to the haziness of my grandfather's youth and his relationship with cinema, that of my father is clearer. In 1984, when my dad was nine, my grandfather took him and a group of friends to a screening of Once Upon a Time in the West. In a small article he wrote, he talked about the "gazes that define an entire Past" and "the photography that transforms the setting into a main character" (Kino,

2012) , and then concluded that this was probably "the film that made him fall in love with Cinema". At first, I thought this to be too bold a claim, how can falling in love with something be so clear-cut? But then I got it.

I was ten years older than my father when I watched Once Upon a Time in the West and just a few months younger when I watched The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly. Even though these films persistently found ways into my life, either as singular scenes I had to study for classes or through their fascinating soundtracks; when my sister and I gave a Blu-ray box set of Dollars Trilogy to my dad for Christmas, I had no idea what awaited me.

We put a stop to my Western ignorance that same Christmas break. Instead of watching them in the order they came out, I asked to start with The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly. That cover of the DVD I had come across as a kid had stuck with me in such a way that it made sense to start there. Side by side, we sat on the couch and watched the story unfold, glued to the projection screen. We too shared the gaze that defined an entire past, in that case, ours. The triadic structure of the film leaked onto real life, and instead of two we were again three. Maybe there was no Good, no Bad and no Ugly (okay, maybe there was an Ugly), but at that moment Cinema was not just on that side of the screen, for the first time, I felt cinema was a living and physical experience.

Looking, once again, for this transcending feeling, for this sense of connection, I saw C'era Una Volta il West with my father, and in the midst of all the action, all the movement, these characters (and these films) carried with them something more than the violence that defined the genre, they brought something deep within them. Something to do with Life.

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A slice of the world of K-dramas (beyond Squid Game)

by: Felicia Chu

This essay is dedicated to everyone who watched Squid Game and thought, "damn! that was fantastic. I wonder what else K-dramas have to offer!".

South Korean television dramas, also known as K-dramas, are one of the driving forces of Hallyu (directly translated to the "Korean Wave", which refers to the global spread of Korean culture). Structurally, they are usually about 15 episodes, each about an hour long. Growing up watching K-dramas, I have noticed some distinguishable features that never fail to keep me and my family hooked. The following are five reasons why I love the genre and some recommendations to get you started on your K-drama journey!

하나 /hene/ one
A feast for the eyes

Picturesque sets, stylish costumes and devilishly good-looking leads. These are a few things that are almost guaranteed in a K-drama due to its high production value. The following are some Korean dramas that exemplify these characteristics well.

In the Guardian: The Lonely and Great God (2016), several important scenes were filmed in the historic quarter of Quebec. It featured large fields, beautiful blue skies and a romantic-looking Europe. The rom-com, Hotel Del Luna (2019), is known, for the character IU's insanely beautiful wardrobe. She is spotted in over a hundred: vintage, traditional Korean, and modern outfits, which her character accumulated over a millennium. It was as if the costume designers were trying to get IU into as many stunning outfits as possible. In Descendants of the Sun (2016), the four leads were insanely charming and talented. Their skin and hair were flawless, hitting all the ideal conventional Korean beauty standards. I found myself googling their wardrobes, skincare and diets to try to incorporate them into my life.

Interestingly, one of the brands all these K-dramas promoted is... Subway! This brings me to a side note: K-dramas have product placements across the board, also known as PPL. These include the destinations they go to, the clothes they wear and the things they use. Product
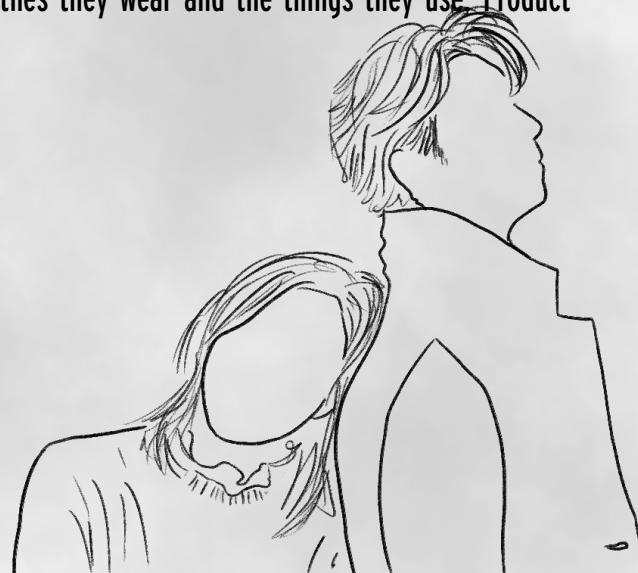
placements help fund the Korean television industry and they can make a product look cool to a Korean/global audience. Although they have been criticised for being excessive and ridiculous. Just for laughs, it does not make sense that all the characters of the Guardian: The Lonely and Great God seem to only drink Toreta Hydration Drink, but It doesn't bother me. I know it's almost sacrilegious to imply that I enjoy good product placement, but I can appreciate(when done well) how the actors can sell a persona with the products they promote. I also find it exciting to look up information about the places and items used in the show and give myself a bit of the K-drama "experience". You can bet you will see me in a Subway rubbing my cheeks with a Kahi moisturiser stick sometime this year!

둘 /tul/ two
Round characters

Nowadays, K-drama characters are evolving to be more complex. As viewers, we get to journey with them as their past haunts them, and they work through their challenges in life.

In My Liberation Notes (2022), we step into the lives of the main characters, who face every day struggles like trying to find a partner and love, as well as conflict with their families. We get deep into the inner workings of all of them, specifically Yeom Mi-Jeong. Throughout the K-drama, Mi-Jeong monologues about how jaded she is with her monotonous life, and we get to experience what it is like to seek "liberation" from it all.

Even the side characters seem increasingly multi-dimensional. An example of this would be in Extraordinary Attor-

ney Woo (2022) where the episodic storytelling is used to delve into characters' backstories before, during and after the engagement with the attorneys. We get to see the different sides of each character and their developments unravel in front of our eyes. Each episode is refreshing and exciting as we meet these new characters at their most vulnerable. The portrayal of familial and community conflicts also makes the characters richer because they all have years of ties.

After watching K-dramas, I often do not hate the antagonists, Instead I understand them. As for the protagonists, I cannot help but root for them as they continue to exist in my head even after the show has concluded.

셋 / sʰetʲ/ three
Blossoming romance

I might be super single (which is also the size of my mattress) for the rest of my life because K-dramas have set the bar sky-high. From the main male character doing little acts of service for the main female character's, to them fighting to protect the main female character from danger. I cannot help but swoon when I watch these scenes and giggle in glee. My favourite example of this trope has to be in Extraordinary Attonery Woo, when Lee Joon-ho teaches Woo Young Woo how to use the revolving door. I love how oftentimes, love is portrayed not as big gestures but in everyday things. This reflects the love I want too. As I get older and my friends start to get attached, I cannot help but feel lonelier. During these low times, the romance in K-dramas allows me to escape into a happier world and encourages me.

All K-dramas have multiple plotlines, one of which is usually about the main characters falling in love. It is as if no matter what kind of person you are, you deserve love! Even if you have an anti-social personality disorder like Ko Moon-young from It's okay not to be okay (2020) or have to pretend to be a man to serve your country like Dam-yi in The king's affection (2021), there will still be someone who sees the beauty in your heart.

네/ne/ four
Moral to learn

Beyond lessons about love, K-dramas always have a variety of life lessons weaved into them. Sometimes it's about family in the context of Confucian values in Korean culture. We see this in themes like filial piety, prioritisation of family and elders, and valuing education. Our Liberation Notes (2022) does this well as it shows a regular family with these values and how the equilibrium is shaken (sometimes for the better) when the values are pushed. The value of money has also been a prominent theme in K-drama's. For example Shining Inheritance (2009) follows Go Eun Song as they navigate life without money and teaches the spoilt Hwan Sunwoo to treasure it. Other times, it's about having motivation and a good work ethic, like Park Se-ro-yi's rise to power in Itaewon Class (2020). I appreciate how each K-drama gives me a different perspective on life. Seeing the characters succeed by sticking to their values or developing new ones always makes me want to be a better person.

다섯/tesʰʌt/ five
Satisfying endings

Lastly, K-dramas tend to have deeply satisfying callbacks with a last episode that links back to the first few. They also tend to conclude with the main conflict resolved in a satisfying way, with the main characters happily in love with each other. Sometimes, these endings are a little rushed. Nevertheless, a good finish, even when rushed, brings me a lot of joy. My favourite conclusion has got to be from Itaewon Class, where the main character gets justice for his father and got to repeat the mean things the antagonist said to him back at him . Another ending I enjoyed was from Do You Like Brahms (2020), as the trio play Brahms again, and the main character has the love and courage to let go of the thing she held most dearly in the past. These endings are so satisfying that they are a balm to my everyday aches of the world and make me go "YES!". After all, the characters deserve the best ending after all the mud they have been dragged through.

K-dramas have the ability to open your world to Korea and beyond. I hope this essay has given you a glimpse into the world of K-dramas. I am sure you will find more reasons to love K-dramas as you embark on your journey ahead!
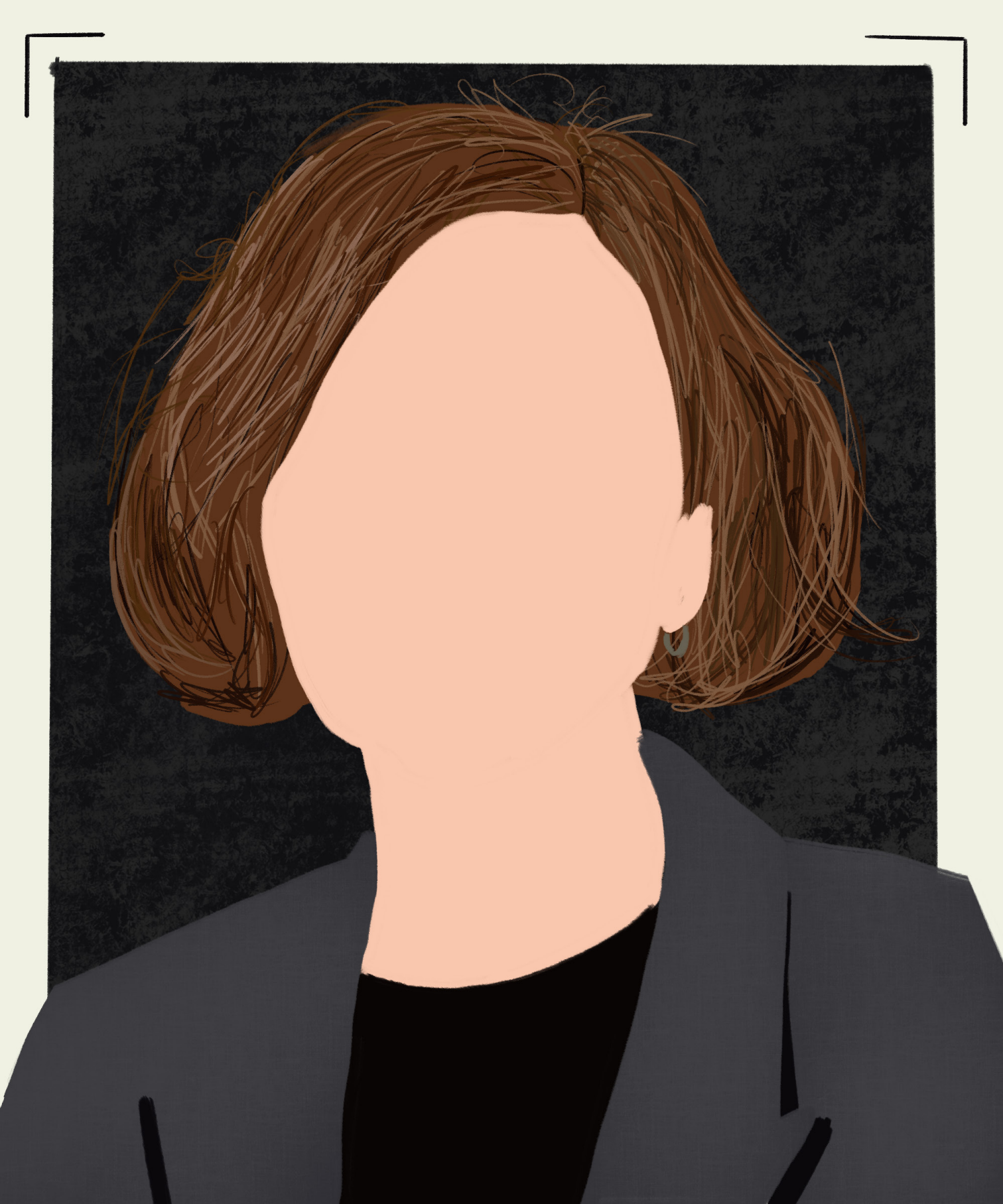
My Favourite Film to Come out Last Year: The Lost Daughter

by: Antoni Konieczy

The Lost Daughter achieves uncanny intensity. One will be left dumbfounded by how forcefully anxiety pervades the film's frames and by how skilfully Maggie Gyllenhaal realises her feature-length debut. This adaptation of a novel by Elena Ferrante conjures up pain and enticement, restlessness and relief, exhaustion and catharsis. It offers viewers moments of silence only to deliver relentless blows. Sometimes, it will smile ingratiatingly, lulling one into serenity, to then utter a tirade in an unknown language, much like the films watched by its protagonist- untranslated.

The opening itself, employing close-ups that never quite catch focus, demonstrates the film's elusiveness. Leda (Olivia Colman) crosses a beach bathed in darkness. There is no context for the viewer; one must instead give in to the impressionism of the image and the sound of waves thundering on the shore.

There is a sense of fragmentation to the narrative, but this is largely deceptive. The film's intertwining timelines- with Leda as a young mother and a middle-aged professor vacationing in Greece, whose daughters had already crossed the threshold of adulthood- remain emotionally cohesive, complement one another, and intensify the other's underlying anxieties.

The sheer potency of the film's image is determined, among other things, by the tension that consumes practically every one of Leda's interactions. Gyllenhaal, therefore, emphasizes the heroine's potential for eruption. Behind the perfunctory responses and Colman's restrained grimaces, there is an invisible barrier that her vacation apartment's caretaker, Lyle (Ed Harris), and a young beach bar worker, Will (Paul Mescal), bounce off of.

The agitation of it all intensifies when the, thus far, empty beach falls under the occupation of a shady family- the protagonist's point of view turns the surrounding visual stimuli into ineffable threats. When a successive eviction of beachgoers, orchestrated by a pregnant Callie (Dagmara Domińczyk), reaches Leda, it puts a stamp on the sensation of trampled personal space. The paranoid atmosphere is further complemented by falling cones, rotting fruit, and pesky insects- all seemingly sworn against Leda.

On this construction of inexpressible fears, Gyllenhaal places her treatise on motherhood- one that is ambivalent, bitter, and often ridden with unfulfillment. Young Leda, a brilliant scholar who specialises in comparative literature, does not exactly fit in with the idealised image of a caring mother- a mother finding all her satisfaction in her child. In response to her husband's "I'm working", she replies, "I'm suffocating." Leda's inter-

actions with her daughters, too, are lined with tension. She and Bianca, the older of two daughters, hurt each other. The blows exchanged by the mother and the child are all the more severe because there is no peaceful alternative in sight. The lack of sensual fulfilment adds to the frustrations. "When you get back I'm gonna make you come," her husband promises. But it is ever harder for Leda to keep coming back.

The Lost Daughter operates in understatements. Ever since the arrival of the young mother Nina (Dakota Johnson), Leda has been watching her. The younger woman seems to be triggering the return of Leda's own memories of motherhood. When the two women talk, their shared exchanges are accompanied by the feeling that only a fraction of what they convey is done so verbally. Much more transpires through glances, smiles, and inconspicuous gestures. The heroines entrust themselves with secrets inaccessible to anyone else. One could describe the film's discourse with its audience analogously.

Gyllenhaal's debut could have very well alienated many viewers. I, though, never once felt unwanted in this journey, despite its inherent emphasis on the experiences of motherhood. On the contrary, while the film emphasised at every step just how much was beyond my grasp, it remained inviting. At the same time, what defines The Lost Daughter's allure, is the film's multifaceted play with the viewer- one that future imitators of Maggie Gyllenhaal's sensibilities are unlikely to ever successfully emulate.

A CUT/TO Interview
with...

Andy Serkis

Participants: Nick Fragel, Molly Bailey, Bobbie-Jo Glendinning, James Buckley, Bruce Bennett, and Andy Serkis
Transcript by Matthew King

Bobbie-Jo: Hi Andy, thank you very much for doing an interview with us. My name's Bobbie-Jo, I'm a film student.

Molly: My name's Molly, I'm also a film student.

James: And I'm James. I'm a history student.

Andy: Oh fantastic. Nice to meet you guys.

Bobbie-Jo: We don't know how much you know about CUT/TO but it's a film journal that our lovely lecturer Bruce put together, and the students run it. Every term we try and put out a journal where people can submit reviews or essays, and we like to get an interview in there with people like yourself; so that we can give some insight on the film world, I guess. So hopefully we are going to get your interview in the next issue.

Molly: Brill. So, my first question is what inspired you to study visual arts and theatre at Lancaster University?

Andy: Well, there are two things, really. I was looking for a visual arts course. I was very much into painting and graphics, and it seemed to be very strong at Lancaster University. And as soon as I came up to look at the place, I fell in love with it, really. But also, the second motive was very much to do with my love for the Lake District and mountaineering - so it was a happy coincidence. It was literally the best visual arts course I'd seen and it was near the place where I really wanted to spend a lot of time. But I had no intentions of doing theatre at all, when I came to Lancaster. I was so focused on the art and painting and graphics, I'd neglected to realise you had to do a third course in the first year. So, I really had no idea and then in the first week of being there, I realised that there was a really strong theatre studies department and I literally started working, right down the other end of the spine at Pendle on the art course. But I increasingly spent more time up at the Nuffield Theatre working on projects, and at first it was more along the lines of, creating posters and working on the sets and so on. And then I started acting in some of the productions. By the end of the first year, I was offered this really great part in a play called Gotcha by Barry Keith and directed by a really excellent actor called Tony Bell, who is one of the alumni, of course, in Lancaster. It was just this extraordinary experience of really understanding what it's like to fully immerse and walk in the shoes of the characters. So, by the end of the first year I'd made the decision to change my degree entirely. Lancaster, of course, has or did at the time when I was there, had the module system where you can sort of build your own degree independent studies. So, I managed to really focus on all of the things that I wanted to study. I constructed a degree which was called, Independent studies in theatre, design and movement; which were two things that were very, very interesting to me. The physical nature of acting even back then was something that I was very interested in, combined with using my visual arts skills and designing theatre sets and lighting. That was one of the great things about the Nuffield Theatre and the theatre studies department was you were just constantly in this creative environment and able to focus on different skills from set

building to performance to lighting to directing to maybe even the media studies department and short filmmaking. It was sort of a happy accident in many respects, although half of it was completely by design going there because of the visual arts course and the mountains.

Molly: Once you left university, did you stay in contact with any of your university friends? Did you have any specific university influence within the arts community or not? Maybe you had a favourite lecturer that really inspired you?

Andy: Absolutely. So I'm still in touch with a number of friends, my closest friends actually from Lancaster University, who were also on the theatre studies course. Julie Batty being one and Nicholas Murchie. Julie works for the BBC and she's worked on programs like Desert Island Discs. Nick is an actor and he's currently doing theatre. So they're two of my closest friends. And then Keith Sturges and Margaret Eddershaw, who were the course professors and the leaders of the theatre studies department. I've kept in touch with them over the years, they followed my career, I guess. And then recently we reengaged in another way. They've begun a charity, a schools charity for a school in South Sudan called the Ebor School for Girls and so I've become an ambassador for their project. Which is basically providing a safe environment for girls. It's a girls school,

set in South Sudan, where of course there has been a lot of Civil War, to educate and enable them to take positions of control and power in government and to find their way into the system so that there are more young women that are empowered in that part of the world. It's a really incredible charity.

My association with Lancaster has stayed on and I've been back and visited the theatre and I've actually been back and visited the university actually a while back now. Every time I drive on the M6 if I'm heading up to the lakes of course my heart kind of sings every time I go past Williamson's memorial and think of the many productions. It's just such a magical place. I've got such fun memories of it.

Molly: Who or what were the biggest influences within the beginning of your career? And did your degree help you with the technicalities of filmmaking?

Andy: It did because I had this opportunity of combining all of the things that interested me, which was theatre design and movement. And at that time it was bringing together sort of physical skills and, then having an opportunity to use at the Nuffield Theatre, which was such an amazing place and so progressive. You could build any kind of auditorium you wanted, you could use any sort of audio-visual techniques that were available at the time. We really pushed the boundaries there. So those were huge influences, and Keith Struges and Margaret Eddershaw also used to run us up to the Edinburgh Festival every year at that time. We actually ran a theatre called the Harriet Watt Theatre. So we were promoting and doing all of the building of the sets for that, for those productions and stage managing all of the production, the other incoming productions. That was just a remarkable kind of breeding ground for creativity.

We also had great teachers. Simon Jones, who came in, he was a lecturer, but he also was a playwright. So it was really exciting to be able to work with one of that calibre who was both a brilliant lecturer and also a playwright. And he would write plays for us to perform. So it was this sort of the stepping stone from the Nuffield Theatre into working at The Dukes was sort of a seamless thing really. But again, it was working with highly, crafted and talented people. There's nothing like learning on this job as well, you know, the playing of a character at night when you're investing in that character and trying to find new things about that character all the time, as with every single performance. Jonathan Petherbridge was a brilliant director for two reasons - one, he was a great theatre director, but also his ethos was very much connected to the community and to the whole notion of theatre as providing a service. I'm so fortunate that I think I started off with that in mind, because I think many actors in a sense don't understand why they act; it's a sort of thing that you do and you're called to do or maybe you feel desired to do. But actually at a certain point, you need to really decide what it is or why you want to do it. I was fortunate enough that my first job was working with John Petherbridge, he instilled in me this notion of, you're providing a service to the community. You're going out and researching a play or a character and bringing back the information, sharing that, and it's very much with a view to causing, minimal perhaps, but some change in thought perception in your audiences. If you carry that with you as an actor or an artist, and I have, it does fill you with a particular kind of purpose. That, I think, has always fueled everything that I've done since. So huge influence in that respect, and that did come from the Nuffield as well as the ethos of the theatre studies department.

Molly: How would you say your career as an actor has influenced your approach to directing?

Andy: Hugely. I mean, you know, when you're with other directors- throughout the theatre experience I started doing lots and lots of plays. I started after leaving The Dukes Playhouse, I worked in various theatres around the land, from Manchester Royal Exchange to Bolton Octagon to big tours everywhere, ending up in London and working the main theatres there. You work with a whole range of different directors. Obviously theatre is about the spoken word predominantly, whereas film and cinema obviously is more of a visual medium. The musculature you get as an actor from uncovering and deconstructing text to be through rehearsal is hugely important because you're really understanding how to deconstruct a play and how to shape your performance through that. See the function of your character through that story. I think a lot of actors who come to screen work without doing any theatre whatsoever, don't have the luxury of that. The idea of breaking down a play with other people in a room collectively and shaping that and being part of something which has a life cycle and growth,you get the chance, every night to improve or change or augment the performance. You build up a very particular set of muscles, acting muscles, doing that, where you don't have that in film, you're working solo a lot of the time. It's what you bring to the table on the day for the performance, for the camera and for your other actors. Some actors don't necessarily engage with you in the same way that you do when you're working. The kind of chemical reaction that you get from someone on stage is very pure and intense. But sometimes when you're working on film, you often get people who are actors who save their performances for when they're on camera. So

there's some value in that. But it means that when they're not on camera, they're on the other side of the camera and you're acting with them, the energy level drops and they're not quite as focused. There are different skills in terms of screen acting and theatre acting and with that, different directors. And so in theatre, on the whole, you get people who are very focused on text and, some are brilliant at staging, or you know, equally some are stronger in areas than others. Equally with film, you get brilliant visionary directors who are not that good at communicating acting ideas to actors, and if you're in a very fortunate position, you get someone who are both. Both a brilliant cinematic visionary, who knows how to shape a scene and make the camera dance in concert with what the actors are doing. So, I was very fortunate and incredibly lucky to work with great film and theatre directors of all different kinds, learning to pick up what you think is your toolbox. You're eventually going to have your own way of telling a
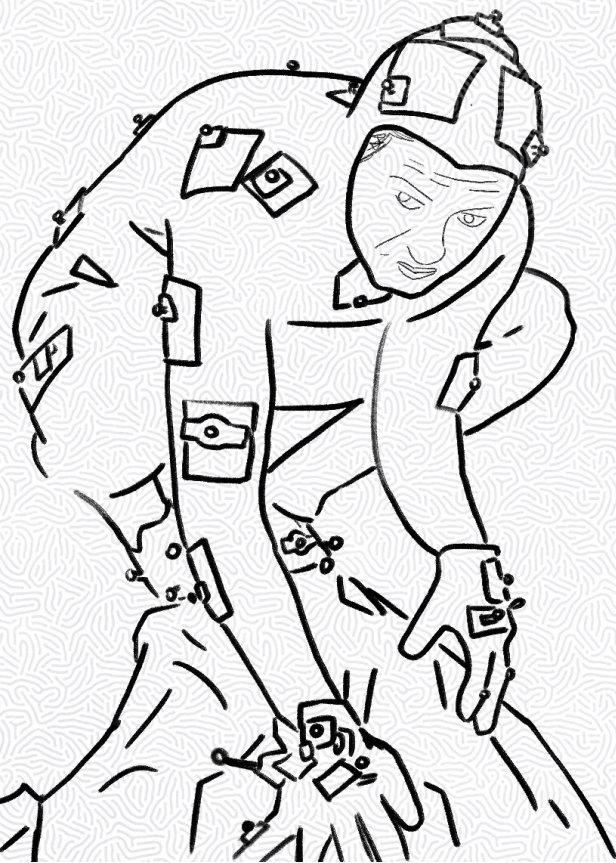
story, whether it be on stage or whether it's a film or TV show. And that's the same process in acting as well as in directing. You know, there are so many methods of acting, so many different ways of approaching a character. And I think it's true to say that I've always kept moving. I mean, I've got a set of principles around how I start to construct a character. But on the whole, you learn so much if you're open to leaf. what other people have to offer. Then when you go into directing, in film particularly, you're taking on a parental role in the sense that your job in many respects is to create an atmosphere where everyone feels valued, so everyone's going to bring 150% to the table. There are film directors who don't do that, who want to own the whole thing; quite megalomaniac in a way. Because they don't want to share what their vision of the story is. But I think the best directors and what I've kind of learned, I think, from some of the best director's is, part of your job is to get this 150%, and really value what everyone's contribution is. If you've got twelve strong voices in the room, you're going to have twelve great ideas. Finally, you have to helm the film, you have to shape it. You have to take all of this, all the raw materials everyone's given you, and you have to make sure it's your singular kind of vision, in a sense, that's guiding all of that. It's the same with actors, they might have a strong idea about the character, it might not fit in with how you've imagined it, but you have to listen. Everything is a melting pot of ideas that you then have to apply storytelling structure. And that, I love about directing. When you start out, I think you feel you have to own the whole thing and actually, as you evolve, you learn to delegate and trust.

Molly: How was your experience initially getting into the practical side of things? And do you have a way you develop your iconic voic-

es for your roles?

Andy: All sorts of different influences and stimuli, really. I mean, you have to remain open with the people that you're working with. You're never the same after a job. When you've been through that experience of playing a character, that character becomes you. You've done something to your body and your mind and your soul, to go on that journey to understand that character; and you can't forget that. You build up different ways of accessing different emotions, and when you're a younger actor, because you have less life experience, you have to do more work in a way. Then as you grow and you've been through pain and suffering and anger and betrayal or whatever, you learn to access those things a lot more easily, I suppose. But in terms of voices, and finding characters, I mean it can be anything from music, from paintings, from research. I do a lot of research. Reading around material, time, history, social hierarchy of a particular period, whatever it is, you bury yourself in that, both as a director and as an actor, obviously. As a director you have to have such a huge knowledge of your subject matter. There are projects that have been in development for between ten and fifteen years, which are still yet to come to fruition. The life cycle of making a film is immense. From the first idea to someone sitting in a cinema room watching a project that you've done is about seven years. So it's a life cycle. From script development to production design, to funding, to casting, to all of the components. But the script writing does take two to three years and many drafts to get the script into a shape where actors will actually think it's decent enough to play the characters or the production company thinks it's a strong enough story to tell.
The point is, you're doing a lot of self-motivating, a lot of self-driving, and a lot of work on your own to build characters. Because what you do in film is mostly, you rehearse for about five minutes and then you start shooting. So you've got to have done all of- all the tip of the iceberg that you may see on screen as like, it's miles deep of research and work. Then you've got to try and effortlessly internalise it and not kind of demonstrate everything. Every single job is so different and you're scrutinising the minutiae of psychology and the psychological aspect of a personality of a character or the physicality of a character. You know, anything from Caesar in Planet of the Apes to Gollum to playing Ian Brady, or I've just a Luther film with Idris Elba and I've been playing this rather psychotic character. With every single role, you never feel like you've done it before. Consequently, it's like starting from scratch every single time. I mean, of course, you've got skills that you've built up over the years, but you don't want to fall back on traits. So constantly, you're challenging yourself to try to find a new avenue into a character.

Molly: And what would you say is your most difficult role today, in terms of voice, acting and performance?

Andy: So many difficult characters. But I think one of the most challenging was when I played Ian Brady in Longford. It was about Lord Longford who had a relationship with Myra Hindely and tried to believe that there was a possibility that she could redeem herself. He was quite a religious man. Ian Brady was her accomplice and they performed a series of horrendous child murders in the sixties. That was, I think, one of the most difficult characters to actually find any common ground with or empathise with. To try and believe that I could embody that headspace and mind set and believe that was my reality and normality. That was

hard. I'll give you an example, he said a very extraordinary thing, which was he felt the most validated in his life when he was standing on the moors with Myra Hindley, burying the children that they had just performed horrific sex acts on and he said, "I've never felt so alive or so much love". And to get your head around that is quite extraordinary. And I was like, how do I even begin to engage with this? How do I even begin to contemplate that? So, what I had to do was to think my way through what is the thing that validates my life the most? The most extraordinary experience of my life? That was witnessing the birth of my children in our house and that kind of elevation and emotion and that sense of place in the universe and that kind of validation. That was my version of that. So when I was playing that role, that was my thought process into it. So, that was a hard role to play.

Molly: Who's your favourite director?

Andy: That's really unfair. Oh, look, obviously I've got a huge relationship with Peter Jackson. We've spent many years working together in all sorts of ways and he's been a huge influence. Even before I started working with him,

I adored his films. He made a film called Heavenly Creatures, which is an exceptional, beautiful film, which was also written by Fran Walsh, his partner. I think when I first met them, when we started doing Lord of the Rings, I just knew that we would not just be doing these projects together because we just clicked in a very particular way and obviously we went on a huge journey with just the Lord of the Rings trilogy. Then, almost immediately afterwards, or whilst we were still doing pickups for The Return of the King (the final movie from The Lord of the Rings trilogy), he asked me to play King Kong. That was a huge epiphany for me because, I'd just played this three and a half hobbit and now he's asking me to play a 25 foot gorilla. They always come from a sense of story and character and a real, authenticity. The forensic and the detail in all the work that they do, even though they're sort of fantasy projects, they are treated like historical projects. King Kong, which is based on the 1933 version of King Kong, there's a lot of research into the period; and just the way we want to approach the character of Gollum himself. That there was a springboard for many, many other projects. I worked with him on Tintin after that. Then he asked me not only to reprise the role of Gollum, but to direct the second unit for the film, which was a big undertaking. So, the second unit on a movie tends to shoot the big kind of action sequences, and he wanted me to do it because he knew that I was heading towards directing. I'd directed short films, which he'd seen, and he mentored me. He knew that I was heading towards directing my first full length film. It was a relatively small film in comparison. He gave me that opportunity to really learn my directing skills. I can't really express how much of a mentor he's been to me. You know, we continue to work together. I think he would have to be the person I'm closest to in terms of taste, because I love

the way that he uses the camera and he kind of creates a sense of movement and the way that he feeds off the actors performances with the camera, is quite something else.

Bobbie-Jo: I just want to know if you could explain the differences between motion capture and performance capture?

Andy: Good question. When we started doing this, there was no facial capture, so it was literally more about motion capture. Motion capture came out of the medical industry. Actually, it came out of gait analysis. So if you had an injury, you put markers on your ankle and could track it so that they could see if it was broken or if it was repairing itself. Then that technology was used in very early video games for capturing sportspeople or martial artists. it started literally when we were making Lord of the Rings, and there was a film before that called Final Fantasy and also Polar Express, around that time those films were starting to use motion capture on the big screen. The difference is, motion capture is you can put a dot on a tennis ball and roll it along the floor, and that would be capturing its motion, or you could put a dot on a dog and it would be moving around, and then you're literally capturing its motion by triangulation. Which are motion capture cameras, sending an infrared beam coming off the reflective marker, and then triangulating that in space. On The Lord of the Rings, that's what we did for Gollum. So my facial expressions, all of Gollum and Spiegel's facial expressions and all of the acting and interacting between themselves and with the other actors, I was on set shooting, filming, traditionally, and then I would go back and have reshoots. We'd always do a blank pass with me not in it. And then the other actors would have to act to a tennis ball on a stick. Then I would go back to the motion capture stage and then choreogra-

phy myself back into the empty plate version of the scene. More often than not, we actually used the shots that I'd been acting with them on camera. Because, if there was a lot of heavy interaction like materials being pulled, you know, there's a lot of grabbing or physical kind of interaction you want to actually have that. Gollum was painted on top of me as it were.
Then we did King Kong, which is the next film. We started investigating, shooting some facial capture, and that was with tiny little markers on my face. And so that picks up all of your facial expressions, then they build a facial rig and then those dates are translated onto that digital facial rig. So every time you pull an expression, you're driving a digital mask in effect. But that didn't happen until Kong and even then it was very unwieldy and it was a huge bank, an array of cameras and you had to try to act on the physical scenes using just motion capture. And then I had to do everything all over again.

Bobbie-Jo: Do you carry anything with you from your first ever motion capture performance?

Andy: Oh yeah, I was very fortunate, that the day Peter Jackson asked me to do King Kong was actually my birthday in 2003 and it was Easter Weekend. That very day he invited me over for lunch, and he said we want you to play King Kong, and he gave me the ring, the actual ring that's in the Two Towers that Frodo carries, that we acted with. So that I have. That's a very important prop to have. I have the ring!

James: Is there one thing that stands out to you throughout your career on either side of the camera, in production, acting and directing. Is there one thing that stands out as the

thing you are most proud of?

Andy: I really loved playing Ian Dury in Sex and Dugs and Rock and Roll. That was easy because he was a hero of mine when I was growing up. I actually met him, before I knew I was gonna be playing him actually. But he was an extraordinary character. And then we got to know the family who were very influential. It helped us shape the script. He sadly died before he got to see it. But they opened up his lock up and gave me all these costumes to wear for the film. Just the whole process of sort of becoming him and getting into this headspace was an extraordinary thing. Then on the directing front, I made a film called Breathe, which was the story of a person who in the fifties, he caught polio and was destined to be in an iron lung for the rest of his life. And this is a true story, and it happens to be the story of my business partner, Jonathan Cavendish, we run The Imaginarium together. It's an incredible tale because he was about to give up on life and then his wife said, "What can I do to make things better for you

He said, "Look, I don't want to live in a hospital", and they said, "well there's no way we can get you out of the hospital because you'll die", and he said "well I'll take that chance if you get me out, I'll live for as long as I can. And you'll just have to trust that we can make it work somehow". So they escape. They literally escaped from the hospital. They had 25 years of him living on a ventilator at home, so he was like a real pioneer. It was like the equivalent of landing on the moon. No one had ever lived outside of the hospital system on a ventilator. They had incredible scrapes that they got into, like when the electricity ran out and they had to hand pump to keep him alive. It's a phenomenal kind of small but big story. The people involved and Jonathan, my business partner, is his son. If you ever get the chance to see it it's a really good tale.

James: Is there anything coming up in the near future that you're allowed to promote that you'd like to promote?

Andy: Yes. I'm finally getting to make Animal Farm! It's taken ten years to get off the ground. In fact, when we first started The Imaginarium, that was the inaugural project, we are going to make Animal Farm. We've been through so many iterations of scripts and trying to find the right tone for how you tell the story for now and make it resonate and look in the world that we're living in. We have a particular angle on it, which I think is going to really engage audiences across from 8 to 80 really. But then it's finding people who want to make that movie with you and go on that journey with you. And finally, it's all coming together. It's an animated movie and using facial capture, so all the animals will kind of be anthropomorphized. We've completed the first animatic of the whole thing, which we'll be able to see the whole story together for the first time this weekend. So gradually it's coming into being. That is really exciting. Hopefully this time next year you'll be going to see it in the cinema.

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