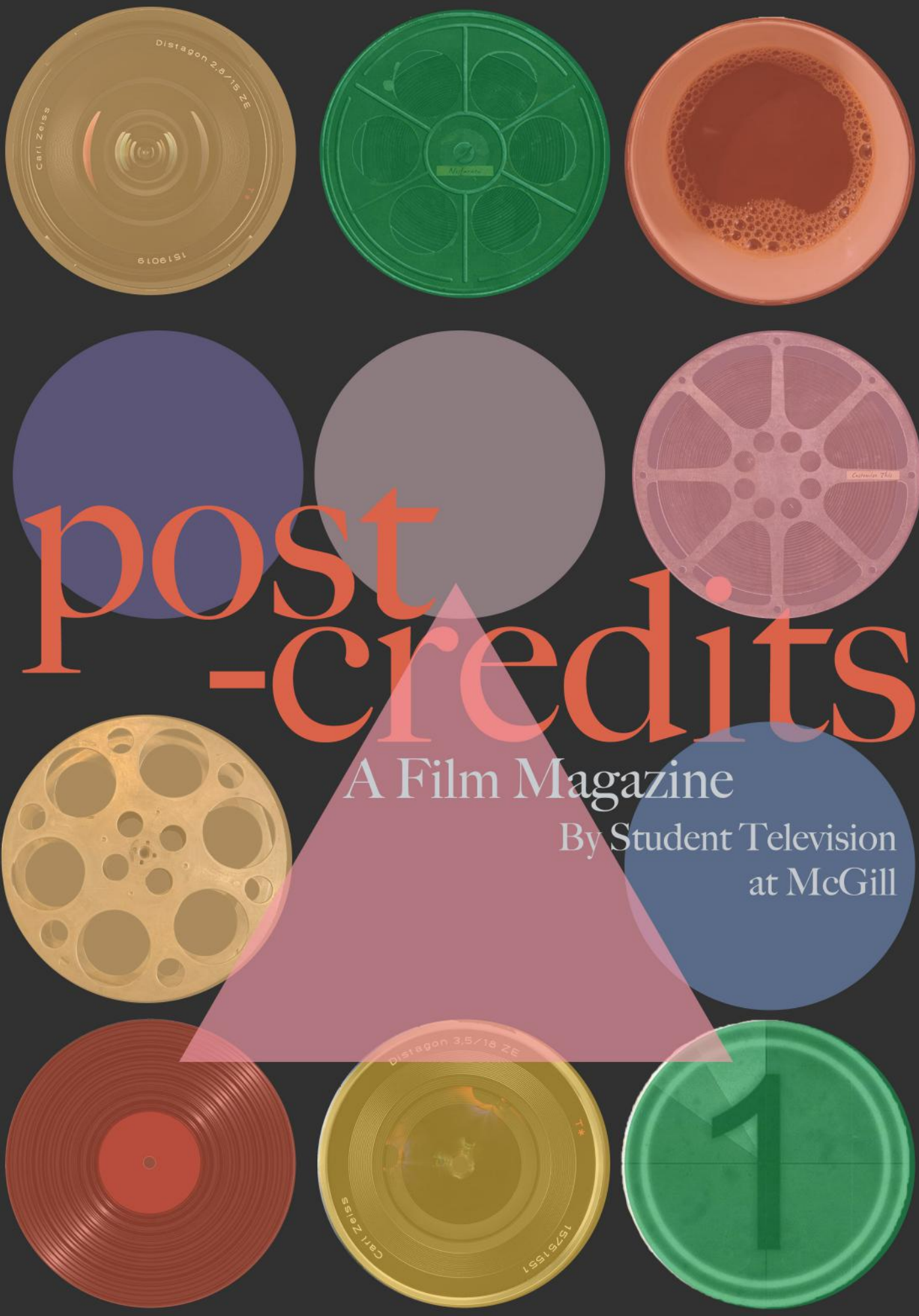


post-credits

A Film Magazine

By Student Television at McGill

Editor's note

As the university's only club keeping the art of film alive, Student Television at McGill is launching McGill's first-ever Film Review Magazine, Post Credits. Featuring TVM members' impassioned op-eds on current and deep-cut cinema, our production studio will be keeping you informed on what to watch and what to catch up on. We're thrilled to bring this initiative to our campus, to revive the critical discourse of your most beloved, questioned, and loathed films. However, for our first issue, we wanted to start on a more positive note, exclusively featuring shining reviews of recent and past gems.

With every passing day, cinema is losing its special power to bring people together through shared, fervent conversation. In these pages, we hope to mobilize our fellow students to return to the movie theatres, away from the isolation of their laptop screens and living rooms, to reignite authentic critical discussions about the worlds of unseen perspectives a new movie can teleport you to. So, go out with a friend, or TVM member, support your local cinema, sit back and relax, and

most importantly, let your mind wander as the Post-Credits roll.

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Anya Kasuri and Sascha Siddiqui

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It Was Just An Accident



By: Miren Ollero

10/10

Jafar Panahi's It Was Just an Accident (2025) is not only an incredible film that denounces how the Iranian regime influences its people's behavior, but it also forces us to question our own belief in humanity. And this is not the first time that Panahi strikes the public with a gripping film that challenges the Iranian authority and engenders controversy, as was the case with his previous works, Taxi (2015) and No Bears (2022).

Despite being sentenced by the Iranian authorities to a six year prison sentence in 2010, Panahi has resiliently continued filmmaking. It Was Just An Accident shows once again that Panahi is one of the best Irani directors, fearless of controversy as long as he can defend his values and live through expressing his art.

Careful! Spoiler warning. I'll be discussing the storyline in the remainder of this review.

In this movie, a mechanic named Vahid encounters a man whose unsettling voice has haunted him for months. He recognizes Eghbal, the officer who tortured him when he was imprisoned as an enemy of the regime. But because Vahid was blindfolded for the whole duration of his sentence, he cannot be completely certain of the man's identity. The film follows Vahid and four former prisoners as they try to confirm that the man they have captured is Eghbal before they kill him to take their revenge.

In this intriguing narrative, Panahi shows very accurately how every person deals differently with their traumas, each varying by a person's nature. Moreover, because the characters' suffering was simply too great, there seems to be no right or wrong answer on how to act in such an emotionally tumultuous situation. Panahi puts into question justice itself: where is the line between what is truly just and what is not? Can we remain just if the social structures we live under fail to do so first? If bad societies breed bad citizens, can we blame these people for wanting to get revenge on their enemy by committing a murder when they grew up in a regime where "capital punishment" is a legal penalty?

And this leads us to one of the main aspects the director wanted to showcase through this movie: How the Iranian regime, like most authoritarian states, destroys its people inside and out.

Panahi deliberately chooses to omit whether these characters were innocent or guilty when they were imprisoned and tortured because he wishes to show us what the bigger problem is: the consequences that such a ruthless punishment provokes on those who suffer it. Not only did the five characters lose their jobs, their wives, and everything that they had, but they also lost their trust in one another. As an effect of living in a regime where there is no freedom or certainty in any one person's position as an ally or an enemy, mistrust spreads like a virus even between the 5 characters. Just like uncertainty remains vast in this regime, the identity of Eghbal is too, creating a tension among the main characters and their atmosphere. And the blindfold that impeded the characters from confirming Eghbal's identity perfectly symbolizes the persistent doubt that one goes through in such an oppressive regime.

The reign of doubt opens a door to fanaticism: no certainty means that there is no truth to hold on to, which explains why fanaticism can appear as the only way not to feel lost in an uprooted society. Eghbal, for instance, found solace when facing death since his religion promises him a happy afterlife. Hence the moment of the film when Eghbal admits to be Vahid's former torturer is crucial because certainty reveals itself to all the remaining characters. While Eghbal no longer fears death in his certainty that he will die a martyr, Vahid and Shiva—both former prisoners—no longer reserve doubts upon his identity.



At that moment, Shiva releases all her anger and resentment to Eghbal by recounting all the misfortunes that she went through as well as the psychological damage that followed her torture. Through this poignant dialogue, Eghbal faces his victim's suffering, and slowly starts to gain compassion as his fanaticism fades away. He ends up apologizing, and Vahid and Shiva decide to unleash him, hoping that he has learned from this confrontation.

This final dialogue not only displays a great performance from both actors, but it also shows the importance of reconciling with death, and how it can save you from the false beliefs that fanaticism drags you into. It makes you realize that there is no truth in whatever you chose to blindly believe in.

When confronted with death and a forced acknowledgement of the blood he still has on his hands, Eghbal's blindfold is finally removed. He realizes that he is not a prophet, but a mere man who has people to care and provide for. He faces repentance for his immoral actions because he is finally capable of garnering empathy for others and their suffering.

The final scene of the movie arouses brilliant questions—does Eghbal's blindfold truly come off? Is his apology really sincere? Or is he still capable of murder, learning nothing from his earlier dilemmas with death and his victims?

The spectator, as well as the main character, is once again forced into doubt as we hear Eghbal's steps behind Vahid, but without seeing if the torturer truly is there or if he is just imagining it.

The ending leaves us in a very profound dilemma: will we place our faith in humanity, or abandon it? Indeed, hearing the uncomfortable and scary noise of Eghbal's steps gives us two choices: either we choose to believe in humanity, and decide that the noise is only in Vahid's head, as a result of his trauma, or we choose to think that Eghbal has really come back to kill or capture Vahid despite him sparing his life, and therefore he is as inhumane as before.

In all cases, whichever answer we believe, we see that the one who lives with the traumas of torture will never truly be free. He will always be haunted by his tormentor, whether it is real or only in his head.

Panahi's subtle symbolism based on strong political and philosophical statements, as well as the incredible dialogues and acting that come out of this movie, are what makes it a 10/10 in my opinion. Go watch Panahi's latest gem if you still haven't, as the movie is screening in both Cineplex and Cinéma du Parc.





BUGONIA



Bees, Buzz cuts, and Basements

By: Amy Qi 7.5 / 10

In the zeitgeist of increasing polarization and conspiracy theorizing, Bugonia perfectly captures what it feels like to live in these times. Bugonia is Yorgos Lanthimos' latest absurdist black comedy featuring Emma Stone and Jesse Plemons. It is an English-language remake of Jang Joon-hwan's 2003 South Korean film "Save the Green Planet!".

Despite knowing little about the movie's premise, I had high expectations going in because of Lanthimos' track record for creating incredibly bizarre, genre-defying films. Even still, Bugonia managed to pleasantly surprise me, and I'm still thinking about it days after watching.

From a beehive, we meet our protagonist, Teddy (Jesse Plemons), an obstinate conspiracy theorist who believes the CEO of the pharmaceutical enterprise Auxolith, Michelle Fuller (Emma Stone), is part of an alien species known as the "Andromendans." As a result, alongside his misled cousin Don (Aidan Delbis), Teddy abducts her, and what ensues is a near two-hour unraveling of all involved.



Bugonia feels to me simultaneously like a very un-Yorgos-like film, whilst also being exactly what I would expect from him. From the get-go, Bugonia is replete with an intense score, saturated with light, and plows on with a jarring cadence. Lanthimos is able to create a variety of liminal spaces, and together with Robbie Ryan there are some really beautifully blocked long shots in the film. My favourite is a sequence where the camera is nestled inside Michelle's opulent house and we, the audience, look out through the floor-to-ceiling windows as the action unfolds in her backyard. However, despite a few stand-out scenes, I do prefer the overall look of their other work, such as Poor Things (2023) and The Favourite (2018). I think given the typical weirdness of Lanthimos' films, the worlds he creates are more enthralling when presented through stylized, experimental filmmaking. For me, this is stylistically one of Lanthimos' weakest films. I almost wish they leaned more into the cool-toned look of scenes outside of Teddy's house, rather than the strong, oversaturated yellow in his basement. Overall, I feel like the film had so much potential to lean more into a hallmark Lanthimos colour palette.



The core of Bugonia is centered on an exploration of Teddy as a character, and understanding how an individual's reaction with hegemonic institutions and their environment has culminated in who he has become. Despite clearly being misguided, we're able to sympathize with him, and in a way, he almost feels more human than Michelle. It's difficult in general for directors and writers to craft seemingly immoral yet sympathetic characters, and it is especially impressive in this case considering how deplorable Teddy should be. Plemons' delivers a captivating performance, and although there were times I wasn't totally convinced by Emma Stone's delivery, I think both actors are ultimately able to pull it off.

At the risk of spoiling the movie, I think the strength of Bugonia lies in its commentary on capitalism and its existential themes. It is a very 2025 movie, and it feels very of the times. But, as is my general modus operandi with watching movies, I think the less you know going into this one, the better. So, go watch Bugonia and enjoy the ride!

BUGONIA

Everything is material for myth, even the present moment.

10/10 By: Riley Christensen

Paul Thomas Anderson and, more controversially, Ari Aster have both attempted to canonize our times this year. Aster's Eddington focuses on the manic-fever of 2020, while PTA's One Battle After Another (can you hear the best picture Oscar being engraved?) extrapolates an America a few paces deeper into whatever pit it is currently falling into. OBAO serves as the perfect manifestation of liberal doomscrolling circa November 2024. I don't say this to critique the film. It is a feature of the film that it so accurately depicts the imagination of that moment—it is essentially a thought experiment of if 'project 2025' came to pass. Both OBAO and Eddington view the political landscape through a socio-cultural lens: concerned more about the differences between progressives and reactionary conservatives than those between amazon workers and Jeff Bezos. There are some nuances, such as polite WASP society not accepting Lockjaw due to his low station and Aster's data center wrinkle. By and large, however, these films focus on political affiliation over class.

Enter Yorgos Lanthimos' new feature: Bugonia, starring Emma Stone as CEO Michelle Fuller and Jesse Plemons as citizen 'Teddy'. This is a state of the union which takes a much longer view of our moment, and in doing so, I believe it manages to create a myth sourced from the past 15 years of societal change.

Importantly, Lanthimos does not try to personify the current political discourse. Stone is not a progressive activist and Plemons is not really an ethno-nationalist. Instead, he takes us back to 2016—where it all began. A CEO of the global elite, technocratic and institution-loving; the Ivy-League inheritors of America who, in their ignorance, created people like Teddy; provincial precariats ready to believe anything that might give them their life back.







Watching Stone and Plemons cross-examine each other is watching the inciting incident of our times dressed as a domestic thriller. The myth of it all comes in the unforgettable third act.

And we may think that we are out of the age of myth, that our world is too 'modern' and mundane for any tall tales. Our times are too ugly with our AI slop and leggings and alcohol-free beer and bubble sedans and draftkings. However, each era has its own trappings waiting to be codified. As we speak, 'indie folk stomp clap hey ho!' is being codified into our imagination of the 2010s, along with the rio de janeiro instagram filter and the plague of the skinny jeans.

How lucky we are then to have the brilliant maestro Yorgos Lanthimos do the mythmaking for us. Yorgos assembles the architecture of our times both high and low—pristine airbrushed office spaces and cracked pavement plazas. G-wagons and red-light masks unaware that around the corner lies the world of the underclass in all its indignities. There is such precision in his eye; how he perfectly captures the narcissism and meritocratic coldness of the 2015 Davos consensus or how he features pictures with Michelle Obama and front-page magazines to provide moral cover for anything less photogenic done to keep ledgers in black—after all they are the winners and the rest are the losers, fair and square.

The other stereo channel, paranoid nativist Jacksonian aggrievement, is rendered in equal clarity and hilarity. A tendency to violence, permanent victimhood, and a sort of viral schizophrenia all reveal themselves as we learn more about Teddy. The clash of these two dogmatic systems is messy; Fuller (Stone) argues that some species of bee are simply meant to die out—nature will take its course. Teddy wants to save what he feels is real humanity in all its ugliness, to stop the march towards a managerial homogeneity. Egos flare in this domestic gutterbrawl and mirror our own prodromic state.

All the while an operatic score portends more with full strings auguring some world-ending drama. Every beat lands perfectly as we wind up to the myth of it all. This myth spun from a thread beginning in Roswell, Dallas, and Ground Zero, material sourced in masonic triangles, bigfoot, flat earth, and the deep state. The American conspiratorial lineage has been fermenting since faith disappeared—faith in government and in anything beyond the individual.

What's left is belief in the self, suspicion of the rest, and a desperate need to make meaning from paranoia. It all leads to an absurd, ugly, and distinctly American myth. And I salute Yorgos for running through the ticker-tape, no punches pulled; the furthest extent of heartland esotericism depicted in zero-gravity. The final images deliver on the early promises of the score. The myth is complete, scratching our itch for doomsday. In my opinion, this is one of the best films of the year and all should go see it immediately.



Bringing Back Gothic Horror in Guillermo del Toro's

Frankenstein

By: Ella Sebok



Sunsets over the North Pole, billowing fog over the moors, and a candlelit rendezvous; nothing screams love story more than these haunting images. Decomposing bodies, bloodied wedding dresses, and Jacob Elordi in the central role; well, that could be a classic love story too.

Guillermo del Toro surely portrays this with his 2025 film Frankenstein. Almost a year after the success of Robert Eggers's gothic horror adaptation Nosferatu, del Toro is keeping the spooky vibes alive. Though he strays from the original plot in his adaptation of Mary Shelly's enduring 1818 novel Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus, del Toro's Frankenstein restores the Gothic mystique of the original novel through its moody cinematography and elaborate costume design.

At the center of this film is, of course, the complex relationship between the creator and the monster. The dying, mad scientist Victor Frankenstein (Oscar Isaac) recounts his regretful tale of creating a monster (Jacob Elordi) out of the dead. The monster longs for human connection, especially with the betrothed bride of Frankenstein's younger brother, Elizabeth (Mia Goth), but is met only with violence from those who think him ugly. Ultimately, in del Toro's adaptation, the Monster becomes a forgiving character, letting Victor die with repentance and saving a fleet of soldiers stuck in the North Pole.

Especially for this tale, every element rides on the visuals' mood. Is the lighting gloomy enough? Does the monster look as if dug straight from the grave? Del Toro not only nails these spidery aspects but also adds some of his classic, breathtaking, natural cinematography. The most visually striking shots of the film are scenes with an abundance of light. Once the Monster escapes Victor's lab, he wanders through the gray, yet refreshingly bright forest like a fawn, seeing the natural world for the first time. The closing shot of the battered Monster walking towards the sun setting on the horizon of a northern glacier is another example of del Toro's beautiful use of light to make a show-stopping shot. These calming visuals contrast with the intense and dark nature of the film's subject, but ground the tale in the beauty of our natural world.

The relationship between Elizabeth and the Monster is one of the major differences from the novel and adds a gothic, melodramatic twist to the film. Elizabeth, who also has a dalliance with Victor, is drawn to the infantile Monster. The two share a bond that is forcefully broken when Victor decides to abandon his creation. Their doomed love story is elevated through their costumes. Elizabeth's wardrobe adds the perfect touch of feminine mysticism. She waltzed into the cellar of Victor's lab, in her sheer lilac night gown and a dripping candelabra in her grasp, to see the newly "born" creature, making her seem at once a premature bride and ghost, floating through the halls. This is mirrored at Elizabeth's wedding, when the Monster carries a bloodied Elizabeth through her opulent wedding procession. As he slowly descends a golden staircase, Elizabeth is draped over his arms, her blood spilling over the sides of her white tool dress like red wine. The image of the pure, ghostly bride is angelic compared to the tattered, brooding Monster. Though the Monster's makeup is questionable (his pale blue skin, accurate to early theater productions of Frankenstein, was a bit unconvincing), his dramatic black cloak and flowy rags are most reminiscent of the original, and perfect for this gothic horror.













However beautiful the visuals, they still failed to mask the struggling storytelling. Perhaps the script fell flat because it is a canonical work of literature–and as always, no adaptation can truly surpass the original. Character arcs were stretched to unnecessary lengths, and the dialogue was at times confusing and dense. The pacing also lagged in moments that should have been charged with far more emotion, making the film feel uneven despite its ambitious tone.

Still, del Toro's vision is bold, and his attention to atmosphere never wavers; it's a film that demands to be felt more than followed. In an era full of movie-remakes and unoriginal plots, it is nice to see del Toro put his artistic expertise into the film. Focusing on the mood and visual language of the film took the pressure off a storyline that already had the reputation of being a Halloween staple, making this film stand out among the many Frankenstein adaptations. It is the perfect spooky season movie and a great way to feel the chill of this haunting tale.
I would rate Frankenstein a 7.5/10. Though Frankenstein is no longer showing in theaters, it is available on Netflix.

Where Demolition Meets Defiance and Cinema meets Courage

NO OTHER LAND

By: Anya Kasuri

A 2024 Palestinian-Israeli collaboration and Oscar-winning documentary, No Other Land left my—otherwise quite loquacious—Contemporary Cinema class in a long, stoic silence. I've never felt as helpless and disheartened by a screen as this one in ARTS 215 left me. Though, you mustn't let my melancholic viewing experience discourage you from watching this striking film because it will be one of the most important pieces of media you'll consume in 2025, growing in relevance with every passing siege, invasion, and demolition by the IDF—some of which Basel Adra, Yuval Abraham, Rachel Szor, and Hamdan Ballal impeccably document with near-fatal courage.

This piece is the epitome of political activism in contemporary cinema. Combining home footage, 4K camera documentations, iPhone camera videos, news channel clips, and snippets of social media posts, we're shown every angle of evidence of the unjust forced displacement facing the Palestinian people from what's left of their ancestral land. In its purest form, this is starkly confounded by the fact that this is the most well-documented genocide in journalistic history.

No Other Land documents the routine disruption every family in the West Bank fears, yet has become indignantly attuned to. "Every week, a new family must decide: Endure, or leave their land."

We see this periodic occurrence, not just through several shots of homes, schools, barns, and playgrounds being demolished by bulldozers decorated with Israeli flags, but also through moments of unsettlingly calm and sometimes even absurd hilarity. There's a potency in the casual language of Basel's family members as they comment throughout these intense moments:

Before Basel and Yuval set out to chase and document IDF convoys invading West Gazan villages, Basel's mother remarks ~ "Put on a warmer coat in case they arrest you", "I'm doing your laundry so you can have clean clothes if you go to prison".

As the IDF conducts yet another midnight raid, Basel's toddler niece refuses to halt her slumber ~ "But I'm sleeping so well".

On their way to school, Basel's younger siblings speak to the camera ~ "We have grass, it exists! We have a mountain, it exists! We have a house, it exists!" ... Young children, not even of the age to sit in the front seat of a car, ruefully plead to the media to acknowledge that they exist, that they're community exists, that they're worth existing.

Through 2000s archival footage, we are transported back to the era of another, more hopeful, generation of Palestinian liberation activists led by Nasser (Basel's father), the same age as Basel when he filmed this documentary. Undeterred as always, Nasser is shown with high spirits and courage as he rallies Palestinian men, women, and children dedicated to their people's liberation. Their clever protest tactics prompt a visit from UK PM Tony Blair, whose attention forces the Israeli government to cancel the demolition of a children's school. Nasser stands at a wary distance, seemingly contemplating the success of his efforts as he sees the village people filled with joy and sudden hope. "This," Basel says, "is a story about power."







Despite the moment being one of progression and hope for the people of Masafar Yatta, this archival footage felt painful, almost haunting, to watch. After seeing contemporary instances of the Israeli demolition of the same village through Basel's camera, the sheer impermanence that international intervention has been characterised by in Gazan history taunts the audience just as it has long done to Nasser and his family. Fleeting moments of hope characterise this constant struggle on both the local and international stage.

Basel fights to demand permanent action from the international community through this new medium of political activism, which gives him and his generation a rejuvenation of hope. Yet, the media of the Western world still struggles to withstand the tyrannical reach of the Israeli state, crippling the chances of a permanent and fair solution. It is worth pointing out that the events of this documentary all take place before October 7th, 2023, demonstrating the persistence yet ongoing neglect of this struggle. These circumstances are what make this documentary all the more important to watch. If you have a beating heart, even if it's under thick skin, this film should make a difference to you. It is possibly the most important Oscar win of the 21st century.

Beyond its political essence, No Other Land is a benevolent tribute to the love and care Palestinians have for their people, their history, and their land. Despite the routine and targeted destruction, the Palestinians persevere and reconstruct in the dead of night, again and again and again. Ilan, the notorious Israeli Civil Administration Inspector of Masafar Yatta, shamelessly places eviction notices on barren land or plain rubble where displaced Palestinian families reside. Living in painful conditions—even paralyzed family members are sheltered by mere caves—the Palestinians refuse to ever leave their land.

Most of all, what struck me, and many viewers alike, was the palpable tension between the documentary's two protagonists, Basel and Yudav, also co-directors of this Palestinian-Israeli collective. Their exchange of laughter, yet inability to ever truly understand the other; Their shared political charge, yet completely disparate human rights, is translated into a rare endearing depiction of Palestinian-Israeli solidarity, which still forces us to confront the discomforts of a relationship with such inequality. We bear witness to an unbreachable gap of social realities with their accompanying anxieties that hinder their ability to communicate openly and escape the haunting silences of their hopeless circumstances. This ubiquitous tension, no matter how many late-night hookahs or tireless cigarettes they share, is a gap that can only ever be bridged if Palestine is one day truly free. No Other Land does not just ask us to watch–it asks us to remember, and to refuse to ever look away again.





The Sound World of



SINNERS



By: Elena Dugas

10/10

Though Sinners could be considered as just another vampire movie blockbuster, a defining feature of the film that cannot be overlooked is its transcendent music. The original score, composed by Ludwig Göransson (composer for Tenet, Oppenheimer, Black Panther, and more), tells a story about the history of the blues and the evolution of African American music, set in the 1930s Mississippi Delta, the birthplace of blues music.
The first sound that is heard in Sinners is a single repeated note from a guitar; a slightly detuned tone that transitions between C# and D, as though the instrument is being tuned in preparation for what's to come. This choice immediately grabs the audience's attention, and signals the film's grounding in blues music, where drop D tuning is common due to its heavy, lavish effect. Much of the score was recorded on an extremely rare 1932 Dobro Cyclops resonator guitar, the same kind that Sammie Moore (Miles Caton) plays on screen, and anyone who loves blues can hear the authenticity and richness of this guitar in the score immediately.

The story of Sinners begins with a scene in which Sammie is seen picking cotton and humming a tune to himself. This tune later becomes the heartbeat of the film's titular surreal montage, which dives into the growth of African American music over time. Shortly after, the "Smokestack Twins" song begins, starting with the driving, expressive motif of Sammie's theme. This motif is repeated throughout the film and evolves seamlessly into a masterfully textured arrangement as the twins first show up on screen, and the viewer is situated within the environment of the film through this heartfelt sonic accompaniment. Göransson's love of blues permeates through the screen here, and throughout the other songs in the first half of the film, to create a striking and passionate entrance into the world of Sinners.

"There are legends of people born with the gift of making music so true it can pierce the veil between life and death, conjuring spirits from the past and the future..." These striking words introduce the film's climactic one-shot, which is arguably the most iconic sequence of the film. This stunning sequence threads together work songs, Delta blues, gospel, West African Zaouli dance, rock, and hip-hop, bringing together decades of music born out of Black musical traditions. Göransson said even just reading this scene in the script gave him "goosebumps because it's such an out-of-body experience," which is exactly how I felt in the theatre watching it. This scene focuses on giving credit to the Black musical communities who have long been robbed of substantial praise for, and overshadowed within, musical genres which they created. What began as Sammie Moore's quiet humming at the beginning of the story becomes an entire musical journey: where the story is able to engage with the musical past and future in a way that I have never seen in another film. The scene also notably includes Xiqu opera, accounting for the musical history of Bo, Grace, and Lisa Chow, the Chinese family who are intertwined with the Black community around them musically, economically, and relationally. The inclusion of the Chow family and their musical background in Sinners broadens the film's cultural landscape, offering a nuanced portrayal of Chinese-American identity within a narrative landscape that often does not include such perspectives. Thus, it positions the music of Sinners as both distinctly African American, but also a music that effectively engages with other cultures and diasporas.

It is immediately following this scene when the people in the juke joint are faced with the vampires, who dauntingly perform an upbeat, folk-inspired rendition of "Pick Poor Robin Clean" for the group. "Pick Poor Robin Clean" is a blues song that takes the position of someone trying to survive by picking apart and taking everything they can from a dead robin. To me, this jolly folk rendition exemplifies the white vampire's inability to engage empathetically and thoughtfully with the community they are attempting to infiltrate, and recalls a common pattern in genres such as blues and jazz, in which white musicians have historically appropriated and overshadowed Black artists. Additionally, this scene provides commentary on Remmick's turn, as an Irish person, from oppressed to oppressor. The use of "Pick Poor Robin Clean" in this scene stuck out to me as an extremely effective choice, and I was impressed with how much insight this short rendition provides to the film's philosophies within this context.

As the story evolves more into its second half, through pieces like "Hole Up 'Til Sunrise" and "Bury That Guitar", the score shifts from mostly acoustic blues to a larger orchestral arrangement with electric guitar, to emphasize the film's action and horror elements. The use of Irish dance and drinking songs in the second half's soundtrack is also extremely effective in integrating Remmick's celtic positionality into the second half of the film in songs such as "Will Ye Go, Lassie Go?" and "Rocky Road to Dublin". This Irish folk music alongside the church organ and orchestral texture acts as an antithesis to the blues-based first half of the score. The integration of church organ into these orchestral arrangements sonically represents much of the religious conflict that the film discusses through Remmick's Irish heritage. The following line sums up this philosophy:"Blues wasn't forced on us like that religion. Nah, son, we brought this with us from home. It's magic, what we do. It's sacred, and big." Both the vampires and the Black community inside of the juke joint are navigating and grappling with the effects of Christianity, white supremacy, and colonialism through their respective Celtic and African American cultural musics.





In the post-credits scene, Sammie Moore returns to his guitar, the instrument he was told to abandon by his father after his return to the church, and quietly plays "This Little Light of Mine." This echoes the church choir heard at the film's beginning, which sang the same tune; therefore, tying the story back to where the film began via the music.





Göransson's collaboration with Ryan Coogler, which was highly influenced by his knowledge of, and personal connection to the genre through his blues-loving father, brings authenticity to Sinners Witnessing and hearing all that Sinners has to offer is truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and I will never forget how I felt walking out of the theatre after seeing it for the first time. The stories that are told through this film are inspiring to no end, and the fervour that Coogler and Göransson had for this project bursts through the screen, essentially smacking the audience in the face with passion. As an aspiring film composer, the music of Sinners moved me in a way that no other movie has, and will continue to inspire my work for years to come.



THE FABELMANS



‘When Art Becomes Truth’

By: Loulwa Basma 9/10

Every filmmaker begins with one question: What happens when you point a camera at the Truth? ‘The Fabelmans’ (2022) is Steven Spielberg’s lifelong attempt to answer that very question.

This semi-autobiographical coming-of-age story transforms Spielberg’s childhood memories into a love letter to cinema—a confession about the cost of turning life into art. Beneath the golden glow of nostalgia lies something deeply human: a portrait of a boy who learns that filmmaking is not just about capturing beauty, but it is also about confronting one's truth. The Fablemans succeeds not because it’s the renowned Steven Spielberg’s life story, but simply because it embodies every creator’s story, within which lies the emotional DNA of what it means to truly become an artist.

Visually, the film is stunning. Spielberg recreates his childhood with a subtle tone of memory through these visuals; soft light, quiet details, and a camera that feels curious rather than grand. The early scenes of young Spielberg, Sammy, filming family camping trips and train crashes truly captures the wonder of discovering a passion for the first time. The performances, especially Michelle Williams’ as Mitzi, are layered and magnetic. Gabriel LaBelle bases the film in a gentle but believable intensity, and Paul Dano gives the father a quiet dignity often missing from film portrayals of engineers.

If I had one criticism, it’s that some scenes lean heavily on sentiment. Spielberg sometimes ties emotional moments together too neatly when the reality they reflected, I felt, was likely much messier. It was almost like he was trying too hard to make the audience feel something. But even that decision of portraying minutely dishonest depictions of reality felt intentional, somewhat mimicking how people polish their own memories with time. Still, however, the strengths overwhelmingly outweigh those minor weaknesses. The film’s heart, honesty, and craftsmanship make it stand out significantly.

When the personal becomes universal:
The Fabelmans follows Sammy Fabelman (Gabriel LaBelle), a young boy who discovers filmmaking after his first trip to the cinema. What begins as innocent fascination slowly becomes a way to understand the world and his own identity. As Sammy grows older, the camera grows with him, turning from a toy into an instrument of survival. Through its lens, he first captures birthday parties and family road trips–moments where the camera feels like a simple toy acting as an extension of a child’s innocent and undeterred curiosity. But as his parents’ marriage begins to fracture, that same lens becomes something different: a tool he utilises to make sense of chaos and hold onto a reality he can control.

The conflict between art and family:
At the heart of the film lies the tension between creativity and responsibility. Sammy’s mother, Mitzi, embodies emotion and spontaneity; she's artistic, impulsive, and free. His father, Burt (Paul Dano), represents logic and structure, a brilliant engineer who can’t understand his son’s creative drive. Their opposing natures embody the identity split that artists so often wrestle with: the dreamer and the realist, constantly at war. Filmmaking becomes Sammy’s refuge, a coping mechanism to process the chaos around him. The first rule heard in filmmaking is to “start with something personal.” Sammy, and Spielberg, do exactly that. He films everything, often without realizing that his camera is revealing truths even he isn’t ready to see. I’ve often felt that same tension, though in a different form.

For me, this film made filmmaking feel possible. Growing up watching movies, I always dreamed of diving deeper into the world of cinema, but The Fabelmans gave me the push to actually begin. I remember sitting in the theatre, just me and my dad, who has always been the one to understand my passion. That moment made the story hit even harder: a film about a boy inspired by his parents,

watched by a girl inspired by hers. It showed me that you don't have to wait for permission or the "right moment" to start creating, you just have to start. Spielberg may have told his story, but anyone who's ever fallen in love with an art form will recognize themselves in Sammy's obsession. That's what makes The Fabelmans so powerful, it's both deeply personal and universally relatable. Like Sammy, I learned that pursuing art isn't about neglecting reality, it's about translating it. Filmmaking became my way to make sense of things I couldn't explain otherwise.

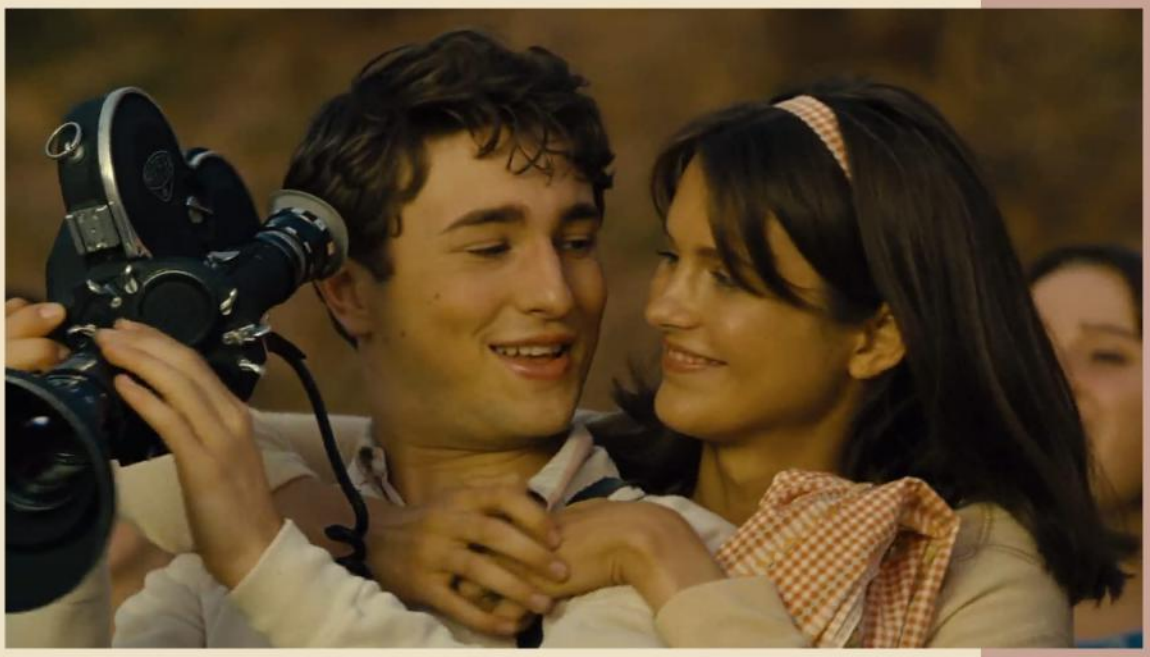
The cost of honesty:

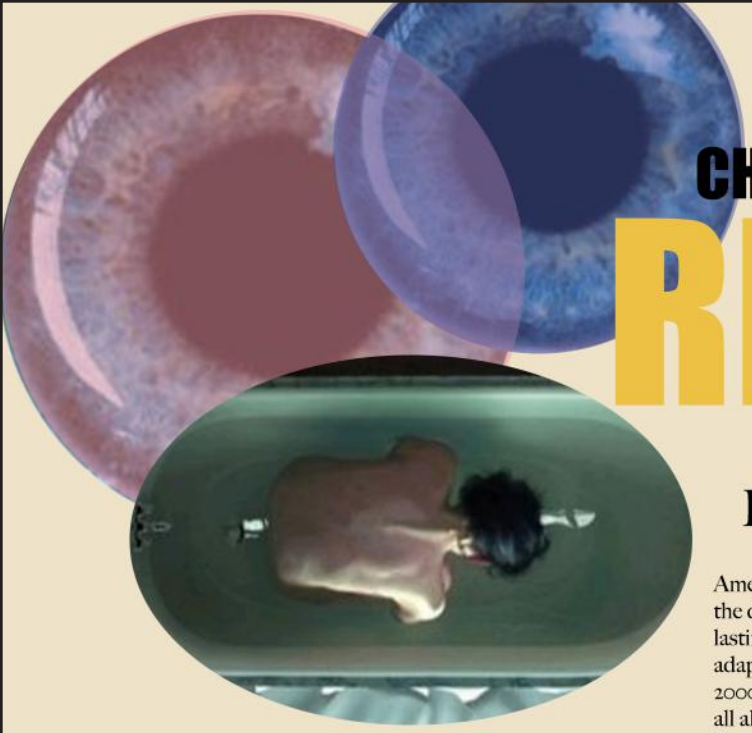
The Fabelmans ultimately asks a painful question: is it right to tell stories that hurt the people you love? When Sammy captures his family's secrets, he faces the artist's eternal dilemma, art demands honesty, but honesty can wound. Spielberg doesn't give an easy answer. Instead, he shows that truth and love can coexist, even if imperfectly. The film reminds us that filmmaking isn't just about beauty, it's about courage. It's about the willingness to show what's real, even when it's uncomfortable. And in doing so, it reveals something profound about storytelling itself: every frame carries both vulnerability and power. Cinema, in this way, becomes a mirror for humanity. It reflects not only what we see, but who we are.The most memorable films, like this one, are those that don't just entertain us, but challenge us to look closer at our own lives, to be more introspective, more honest about who we are and what shapes us.



In The Fabelmans, Spielberg doesn't just tell his origin story, he shares the emotional DNA of what it means to be an artist. It's a film about growing up, about loving something so much that it hurts, and about finding beauty in the act of seeing.

When the lights came up that day in the theatre, something shifted. It wasn't just admiration for Spielberg's craft, it was the realization that stories, no matter how small or personal, have the power to change people. That is the quiet miracle of 'The Fabelmans': it teaches us that art, at its purest, is an act of honesty.





CHASING THE DRAGON OF A DREAM

REQUIEM FOR A DREAM

By: Zachary Honsinger-Ruoff 10/10

America's most trusted dictionary, Merriam-Webster, defines a requiem as a 'mass for the dead'. Originally published in 1978, Hubert Selby Jr.'s Requiem for a Dream made a lasting impact, provoking both controversy and praise. Darren Aronofsky's film adaptation modernizes this Shakespearean-esque tragedy to the uproarious decade of the 2000s. Ahead of its time, the story makes the claim that the American Dream was dead all along. The details may change, but the story at its heart is as timeless as the American Empire. The movie was celebrated for its frenetic style, shocking montages, and a sensational performance delivered by Ellen Burstyn.

The story centres around heroin addict Harry Goldfarb, played by Jared Leto. Harry attempts to become a drug dealer with his friend Tyrone (Marlon Wayans) to escape poverty in hopes to quit his heroin habits. However, he struggles to quit as at work he is completely surrounded by this addictive and accessible commodity, continually tempting him and his girlfriend Marion (Jennifer Connelly). Harry clings to the hope that his current income will pave the way for his ambitions of opening a designer boutique so he can support the dreams of his lover and repair the strained bond with his widowed mother, Sara Goldfarb (Ellen Burstyn). Meanwhile, Sara, lonely and longing for purpose, becomes increasingly preoccupied with the image of what she once looked like and the possibility of reclaiming it.

Within these stories, we see four average people who are currently at the bottom of society. Yet, they still believe that if they do the right things, they can climb up the ladder and achieve the American Dream. From the TV shows that prey on the lonely, to the drugpins that exploit the impoverished and addicted, Requiem for a Dream captures the opportunistic nature of those in power.

The movie's meticulous editing presents the many highs experienced by its characters very well. Its iconic snappy montage of a deep breath, a lighter flick, heroin bubbling, a needle filling, and the pupil expanding communicates the habitual nature of Harry and his friends' drug abuse. The use of Dutch angle shots and fish-eye lenses emphasize the distortion of their reality while intoxicated in this deadly narcotic. This, paired with the delusions and psychedelic trips, blurs reality for the viewer and the cast, making this watch a shared experience which in itself breaks a relational fourth wall. This puts you, the viewer, in a state of uncertainty as the story unfolds, never knowing for certain what is real, embodying the same state the characters are confronted by. These delusions are not only pure drug-induced delirium, but interspersed, they act as glimpses into the cast's dreams and desires.

Aronofsky's use of contrasting colors really helps illuminate the allure of a better life up against the dilapidated state of the characters' current life. The drab greens, yellows, and browns truly highlight the decaying nature of the world that surrounds the cast. Sara's plain, small apartment's only source of light and colour comes from the TV, which projects her favourite show in bright lights that draw Sara in. As she chases her dream to be on that bright colourful show, she pursues more color in different forms: she dyes her hair a bright red, sends the her TV show a letter on in a blue mailbox, and she starts a diet to wear a shiny red dress. Her dream leaks into the reality around her as her wistfulness adds colour to her surroundings. Tyrone's cluttered apartment is a low-lit dirty brown mess which creates large shadows. A literal darkness hangs over his character. When characters escape their homes to get help from the outside world, cold bright whites and blues spill onto into the screen. The colours emphasize a palpably sterile distance between the in-need addicts and powerful exploiters who falsely claim to be their supporters.

The film crescendoes in its last act. The characters' lives are destroyed by drug use and the exploitation of their dreams. The progressive increase of green shades, obscured shots, frayed relationships and dangerous risks lead to a traumatic final montage—precisely where the movie brings you to the lowest of the low in sharp and short cuts, as it shifts through one character after another.

Regular Aronofsky collaborator Clint Mansell's 'Lux Aeterna' had been playing throughout the film, only getting louder with the intensity of the story. Its tragic main melody, topped with battling strings that either dizzyingly sway or powerfully hit, has become so iconic that it has been repurposed in multiple movie trailers and even TikTok memes. The score had been a low, steady fuse throughout the film, until it ultimately culminates in a brilliant explosion during the final montage.

The final scenes do everything to overwhelm your senses in order to give you even the smallest glimpse into the easily misunderstood feelings of the main cast. This montage hits like a truck, leaving you with this rare feeling of being absolutely gutted by a fictional story. In the end, everything calms, and the film leaves you with one last dream of a simple desire to see the people we love, simply be happy, and maybe that's the American Dream. A shame that in this film, it is impossible.



Life is Beautiful

By: Mieko Armellini 10/10



Roberto Benigni's 1997 film, Life is Beautiful, shows how love and imagination persevere to provide hope in the most difficult times. Set in fascist Italy, it follows Guido, a Jewish father, who uses humor and creativity to protect his son from the horrors of a German concentration camp, pretending the entire experience is a contest for a prize. Not the typical Holocaust film, Life is Beautiful ends in hope, blending tragedy with humour, reminding viewers that even in moments of despair, the human spirit can find meaning and laughter.

The charm of the movie lies in its details written into the script. As the story is being set up, we spend the first third of the movie getting to know the characters through a series of scenes that become crucial to understand the humor in the rest of the film's references. Every detail is written into the film with intention, from lines to remember to objects later used, that will later be used to keep the watcher waiting for the next ingenious joke in any scene.

What makes the film so touching is how well it flows : the movie succeeds in its humour; despite being an older movie, the main character's humour certainly holds up today. There are extremely endearing moments of love and innocence that stick, even in the saddest scenes, drawing in the viewer's support for the characters. With wide angles of landscapes and close ups of characters, the cinematography of Life is Beautiful is similar to that of The Sound of Music, set in the Alps and shot on film.

What sets Life is Beautiful apart from other Holocaust films is the hope the movie ends in hope. By keeping hope alive, Guido preserves his child's innocence in a place created to destroy it.





In a universe typically recognized for its lightsaber battles between Jedi and Sith, Andor explores the oppression and the resistance movements that occur during the era of the Galactic Empire through the eyes of its ordinary citizens, adding a level of depth into the Star Wars universe (SWU) that I have rarely witnessed before. Coming as a prequel to the movie Rogue One, the two-season TV show follows Cassian Andor's path from a low-level rule breaker towards becoming the rebel that we know from the film. With Andor, creator Tony Gilroy elevates the SWU by taking the show in a darker, more grounded direction and focusing on realism, slow-burn storytelling and themes of tyranny, resistance and hope.

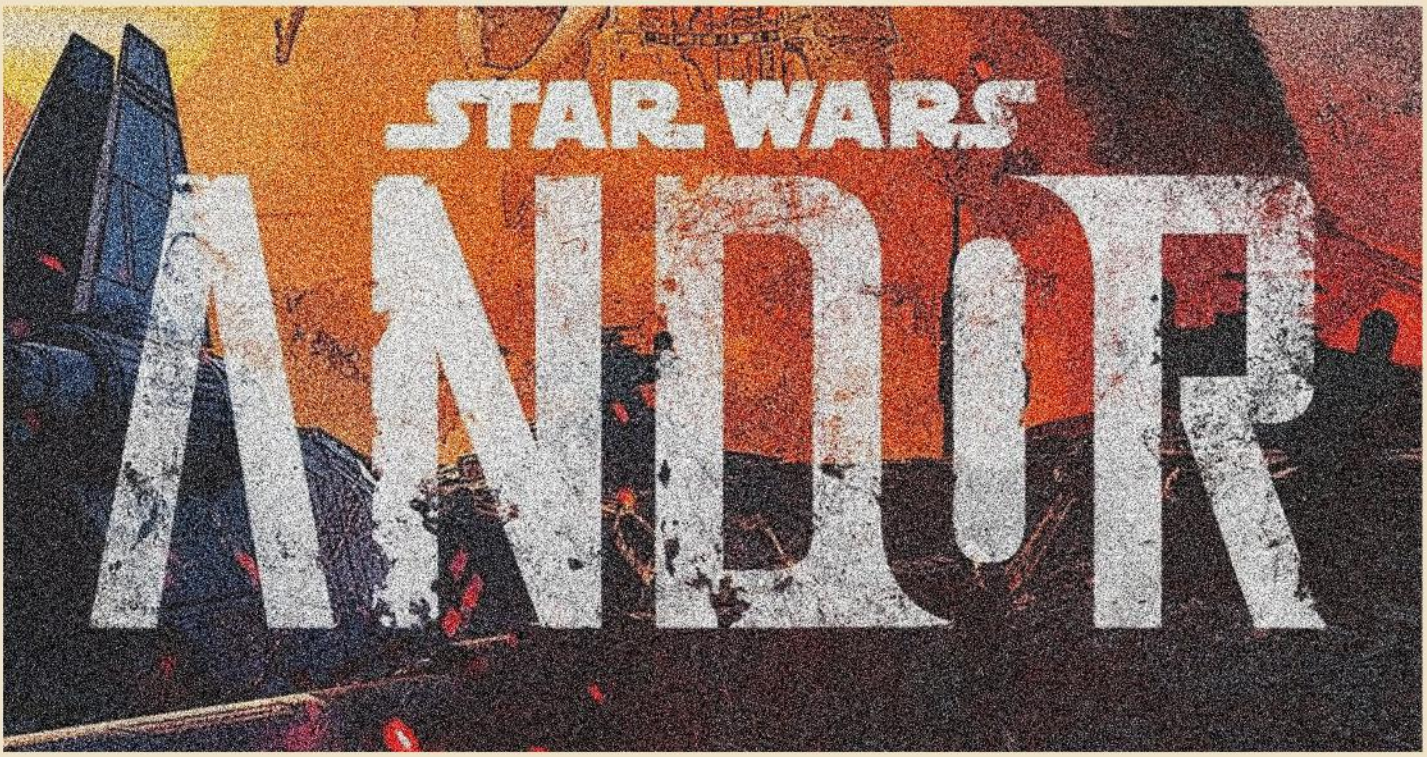
The cinematography of Andor is a masterpiece on its own. Whether in an indoor scene in an Imperial control center or in a spaceship pursuit in the middle of a rare kaleidoscopic celestial event on a remote planet, it made watching the show a visual delight. Every single frame seemed deliberate. In Imperial settings, symmetry, sharp geometry and artificial lighting made me feel the Empire's coldness, rigidity and obsession with order. In contrast, in working-class settings, the asymmetry in the frame and warm lighting made these places appear more organic and lived-in, which made them feel more relatable and comfortable to me.

Production design takes Andor's visual beauty to another level. They used real physical sets for entire neighbourhoods like the ones on Ferrix and Ghorman, and shot on location like in the Scottish Highlands and Montserrat, Catalonia for the planets of Aldhani and Chandrilla. This not only brought new beautiful locations to the SWU, but gave its settings a realistic and grounded look that, personally, made me ten times more immersed while watching the series. This was especially true in the wide scenic shots that took advantage of these locations' natural beauty.

Also, adding to the contrast in visual storytelling between Imperial and common settings, the design for the Galactic capital of Coruscant, with its jungle of monumental brutalist and modernist buildings, dwarfed the characters on screen. This felt like an echo of the Empire's desire to appear as colossal and permanent. In contrast, the organically shaped streets of Ferrix told a story of a spontaneously built city, unaffected by Imperial bureaucracy. The clash that made me realize Andor's genius happened when Stormtroopers and Imperial

Good Luck to the Future of the Franchise: Andor Has Raised the Bar Into Orbit

By: Léo Harfouche



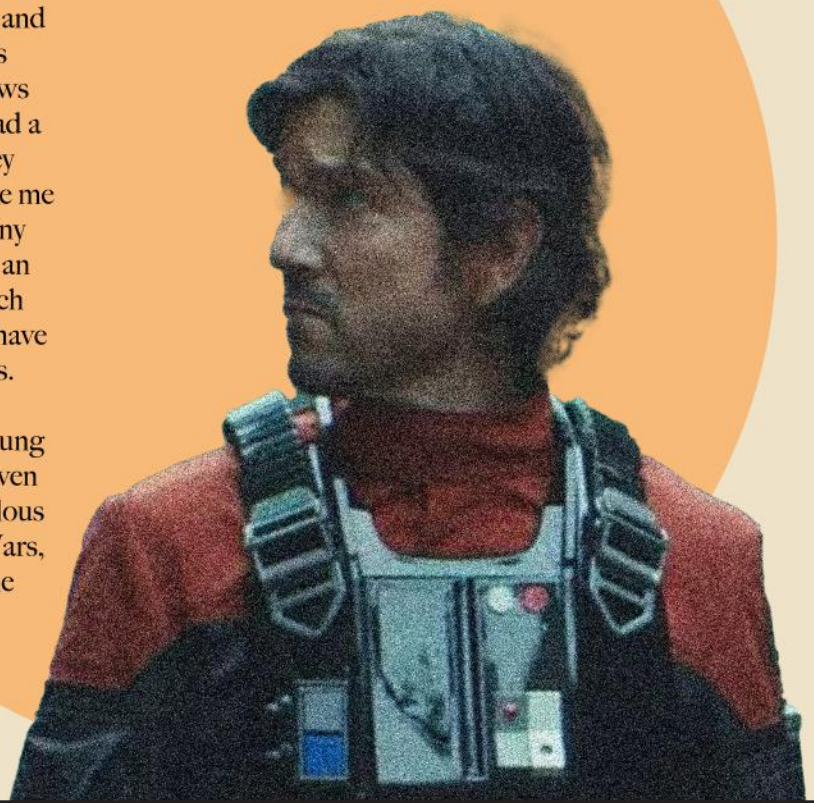
officers, with their monochromatic and sharply cut uniforms reminiscent of their Capital's architecture, landed in common places such as Ferrix. You could immediately feel their parasitic presence among the population that is starting to get fed up with the Empire, which really made me grasp how resistance is often bred by the very oppressor.

Raising the quality of Andor, the characters were played as if it weren't science fiction at all, but, rather, a political thriller necessitating striking emotional complexity. No one was portrayed as purely good or evil, which made it up to me to be the judge. This really maintained the show's accuracy to real life since it wasn't too preachy or on-the-nose. For example, the rebel leader Luthen Rael would often sacrifice his own morality to advance the rebellion's cause. While this can be considered noble by some, others could see some of his actions as wrong, making him an inspiring, yet tragic character. Stellan Skarsgård's acting, which brought a unique theatrical weight that managed not to break the show's immersion, for me, really rounded up this brilliantly imagined character. Similarly, in the realm of the Empire, Denise Gaugh's Supervisor Meero doesn't wake up simply wanting to hurt people; it is her ambition to rise through the ranks of a system that promotes brutal behaviour that makes her ruthless. Through complex characters like these two, the show maintained a high caliber akin to that of shows like Better Call Saul where characters aren't predictable and superficial, but rather worthy of in-depth analysis.

The TV show is made up of multiple storylines that keep the genres diverse throughout. Whether the genre was political drama with secret meetings among senators, action adventure with Cassian's gripping missions, or spy procedural with tense Imperial Security Bureau briefings, I was constantly entertained with intrigue and excitement that were maintained throughout. This is what makes Andor such a unique addition to Star Wars. It treats the Galaxy not as a backdrop for myth, but as a real space with nuanced stories and characters, and so it broadens the reach of Star Wars as it proves that the franchise can handle such depth. Andor added to cultures like the Ghor and the Chandrillans with unique traditions, languages and history, which not only made the series feel incredibly convincing, but also enriched the canon in a blended-in and natural way rather than through cheap lore dumps that felt like fan service. The writing also contributed to the show's genius. The dialogues felt natural and spontaneous all while being flawlessly tailored to each scene. This became clear when the scenes with the most tension were not spaceship pursuits or saber battles, but the conversations and meetings that blended masterful acting with the razor-sharp script; another testament to Andor's unique contribution to the SWU.

Despite all the praise, I couldn't help but feel like the series wasn't rushed in the second season. While the necessary stories were well explored and the production design was as beautiful as ever, the time jumps every three episodes left me desiring more at the end of each arc. What made season 1 so great to me was its slow pace and its focus on details, exploring side stories that enriched Andor's overall world-building. Seeing how many other Star Wars shows have gone over two seasons in the past, I feel like Andor still had a lot of potential that was unnecessarily cut early. Perhaps Disney thought that two seasons were enough to keep "legacy" fans like me hooked to the franchise without the multi-billion dollar company wasting too much of its money on a smaller market. However, an extra one or two seasons would have offered the Galaxy so much more world-building and beautiful cinema and, in turn, could have anchored Andor as a definitive timeless show among the greats.

The recipient of five Emmy Awards, Andor focuses on the unsung heroes that sacrifice so much for a freedom that they may not even enjoy. It combines aesthetic beauty in every frame with meticulous writing and world-class acting making it not only great Star Wars, but great television; the kind that lingers with you long after the credits roll.





VIVRE SA VIE

I don't know

By: Jade Hertz

I've realized I say "I don't know" even when I do know, mostly because whatever I say never feels like the exact shape of what I mean. That's probably why a scene in Jean-Luc Godard's Vivre sa vie stuck with me, a quiet café conversation where an older gentleman tells Nana, "On ne peut pas parler sans mentir" ("one cannot speak without lying"), and that a thought can only exist through the words that express it. It was the first time a film articulated the reason for my ongoing I don't knows—the fear of certainty.

But what makes Vivre sa vie compelling isn't just the dialogue; it is how the film's whole structure mirrors that same uncertainty. Shot in twelve chapters, Godard uses long takes, abrupt cuts, and detached framing to keep us slightly outside Nana's experience. We're watching her, but we're never fully invited in. Anna Karina, the lead actress, is constantly framed in profile, half-turned away, or partially obscured, as if the camera is honestly admitting that it can't fully "know" her either. There's something strangely respectful in that distance.

The best example is "Nana's Dance," a brief scene that looks like freedom as a woman chooses a song and dances alone, until the formal elements begin to push back. The music gradually takes over her rhythm. Sounds from the men in the room bleed into the beat. The camera shifts attention from her to their gaze. Her movements become bigger, almost theatrical, but her smile looks tense, like she's performing the idea of joy rather than feeling it. Godard doesn't hit you over the head with it; he simply lets the room quietly reveal that autonomy is more complicated than Nana believes.

And that's where the film links back to my own obsession with language and meaning. The formal distance, the fragmented structure, and the way Nana is watched rather than understood, all reflect the same gap I feel when I try to say something true and worry it's still somehow wrong. The film doesn't pretend that clarity is easy, or that freedom is clean. It shows how we all perform versions of ourselves, sometimes willingly, or sometimes without even noticing.

Vivre sa vie is worth watching not because it answers anything, but because it leaves room for uncertainty, in its form, in its characters, and in the viewer. It's a film that understands how hard it is to find the right word, and how much of life happens in the attempt, which is perhaps why it carries the title Vivre sa vie, "To live one's life". For all the things I don't know, one thing I do is that McGill students get free access to the library's streaming service, Kanopy, where I watched Vivre sa vie. It's also available on Apple TV, so I dont know — maybe go watch it.



on romcoms

By: Anne-Domièle Gnayoro

Romantic love, experienced through the exciting highs and tumultuous lows of relationships, is a staple of life. It is something most people get to encounter, get devoured by or at least or wish to. Or is it what movies have made us believe ? Romance as a genre has seen many forms on our screens, entertaining us - but, ultimately, deluding us too. Combined with the genre of drama, romance has often unveiled deeply emotional stories delving into the complexities of human nature and relationships. But when audiences are over the tear-jerking tales, they might turn to the genre's kindest niece: the Romcom.

PART 1: Why WE love Romcoms
(disclaimer! some spoiler regarding the following film: "Notting Hill","10 things I hate about you",
"27 dresses")

The genre saw its peak in the 90s and 2000s, but has been declining since, while the criticism has only increased. So why do some of us still love them ? We asked another student to share their opinion:

"Rom-coms remind me of those movies we don't really see anymore: the familiar songs, and the actors I adored when I was younger. They're comforting. Watching them feels like slipping back into a simpler time" - Julia

Key characteristic of the genre
« Love » with capital L
Relationships are often depicted with an almost religious devotion.
It is that mystical force that pushes the protagonist to run after a car to stop the love of their life from getting to that train station.

Meet cute
A chance encounter between main characters leading to an unexpected spark.
Think about Julia Robert's character entering Hugh Grant's bookstore for the first time in "Notting Hill".

Entanglements
There is always some serious circumstances that love has to triumph over
Such as the moment Kat discovers that Patrick was paid to date her in "10 things I hate about you"

Grand romantic gestures
For instance, Jane confessing her love to Kevin under a huge spotlight at a stranger's wedding in the end of "27 dresses"

Interestingly, those who adore romcoms, often end up being their biggest critics as well. We recognise these patterns and tropes. Nonetheless, we delight in them because they offer a form of escapism, either through their happy ending or the ridicule of the situations.



PART 2: Some things we like to see in these movies

The journalist trope
Why do "How to lose a guy in 10 days", "Hitch", "27 dresses" or "The devil wears Prada" have in common ? They all have a main character working in a journal, writing a column or conducting a field research that involves toying with another person's heart. Carrie Bradshaw's influence is indisputable.

The hidden romcom
Many movies have a romance sub-plot without necessarily being romcoms
"Scott Pilgrim"
Scott is fighting 7 evil exes, to win over Ramona Flowers, the girl he literally saw in his dreams. How is that not a romcom?

"Amélie"
Going into it, you don't expect a love story. You don't expect Amélie to receive the same care she so tirelessly gives to others. When it does happen, you realise that you truly receive when you give, and isn't that a better message than most rom-com morals?

...

After having a rough patch with romantic comedies for some time, and eventually deciding to give these movies a second chance, I've come to the conclusion that I do actually love romcoms ! I love the clichés, I love the caricatural characters and yes, I don't mind guessing the end of the movie from its opening scene. Part of enjoying cinema for me is taking pleasure in these little moments when you are immersed in utopic storylines, entertaining drama and stupid jokes: exactly what these movies offer. I believe there is a romcom for everyone, and if you are a hater, you probably just haven't found yours yet !

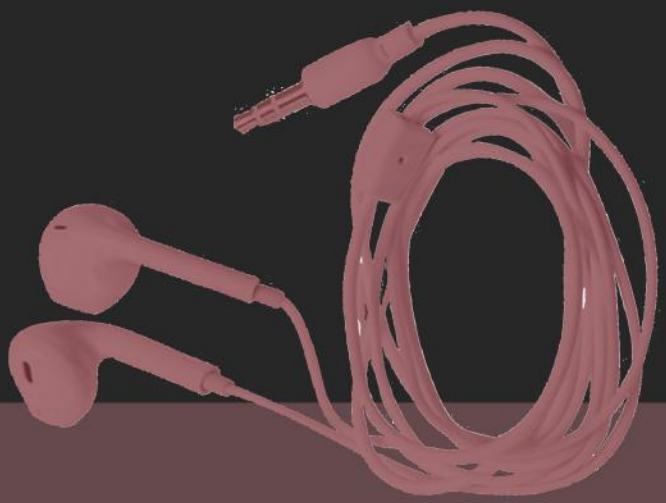


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"You should be inside of a film when you go into a theater. It should surround you, envelope you, so you can live inside a dream."

-

David Lynch