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THE RISE OF THE ANTI-HEROINE
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Cinema Edition

“IF YOU WANT A HAPPY ENDING, THAT DEPENDS OF COURSE ON WHERE YOU STOP YOUR STORY” - ORSON WELLES

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**WANT TO CONTRIBUTE?
WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM
YOU! JUST SEND US AN EMAIL!**



How did we discover the world of cinema?



KIERAN PANUI & KALA TAKEBE BURGESS



There's no denying it. We're both cinema nerds (at least, we like to think so). In fact, Kieran's favourite film is *Rushmore*, and I (kala)'s favourite film is *Fallen Angels* (1995) by Wong Kar Wai. Don't these choices just scream: We know what we are talking about?

Although I (kala) had always loved films due to my mother being a film nerd,

I would say that I became obsessed with films during the pandemic, and I watched one film every night. It became a little ritual. I went all out on the setup too. One wall of my room was completely covered in movie posters that I would collect from different theaters, buy online, or steal some from my mother's collection. As I mentioned, my favourite film

is *Fallen Angels* (1995), and for my birthday, I even bought an A1-size poster from Etsy and framed it. Which I still have to this day (still framed and on the wall.) (I will never get rid of it). I would turn my lights off, put on these purple fairy lights, light a candle for the ambience, and, of course, have a bowl of popcorn or ice cream to snack on while watching. I was also super against going on my phone and made myself focus on the film without any distractions. (This was super hard as someone who is always on their phone.)

A part of me wanted to be so 'different' from the rest, so I only watched films that were a little bit more minor, perhaps not so popular in the West. I think I really took pride in knowing that I knew a little bit more about critically

acclaimed films than the majority of my peers at school. (I promise you, it's not cool.)

But we do know that time is such a precious resource in our lives, especially as students. So, I hope we all have the time to sit down and watch a film, fully explore the world of art, and truly relax. (Unless you're watching a horror film, maybewatch a cartoon film instead.) Grab your wine, popcorn, tea, ice cream or whatever you may be craving and forget about everything going on. You deserve a break.

Film Industry Suffers Following Lockdown Boom

Nearly half the staff at NZ Film Commission faced job loss this year. This comes after a loss of \$85 million worth of taxpayer funding. The New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC), responsible for investing in New Zealand's film industry and promoting the country as a filming location, is facing significant staff layoffs.

In March, various news outlets alleged that up to 21 of 53 staff roles are potentially being cut following the massive reduction to the public service. Yet in the same month, \$800,000 of public money was approved, and a further \$1.2 million was likely to join and be eligible for use. Its purpose? A new documentary film on former Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern.

During the lockdown era, New Zealand's film industry had boomed and attracted great global attention. In 2020, directors seeking a haven undisturbed from health restrictions moved to New Zealand to produce various famous films. James Cameron's *Avatar* sequel and Amazon's *Lord of the Rings* series are two major productions that were shot in New Zealand at the time. Additionally, international inquiries for filming in the country doubled the following year.

Regarding the recent losses, we draw reference from the Herald's conversation with John Barnett. Barnett is a prominent voice within the national industry. He was previously head of South Pacific Pictures, New Zealand's largest production company, for 24 years.

Barnett criticises the production of these latest films as "indulgent", with minimal box office impact. He says that between 2020 and 2023, NZFC spent about \$85M on more than 50 films that made less than \$14M at the box office. It is believed that 90 per cent of all films produced during this period brought in a loss. In contrast, two parties for the farewell and introduction of NZFC's chief executive role saw a total cost of \$16,431 just last week.

The present situation draws a grim outlook for students, particularly those intending to move into the film, performance, and media industries. Graduating under the current government's policy decisions and the present economy is a strain that is already unbearable for the average student. Without considering the gross mismanagement of public resources, we can only wonder how the various public bodies of cinema and media will direct the future of arts and entertainment in New Zealand. Uncertainty continues to linger for university graduates.



NZFC APPROVES PUBLIC FUNDING FOR NEW ARDERN DOCUMENTARY



BOX OFFICE FLOP - NZFC FACING RESTRUCTURING AND LAYOFFS



FILM COMMISSION'S PARTY SPENDING



FILM AND MEDIA LEADERS CONSIDER NEW ZEALAND MEDIA CRISIS



Your Course's Fate in the University's Hand

Most students will have heard by now the pressing uncertainty of various courses subject to cuts within the University's curriculum transformation (CFT) project. A class representative on the University subreddit posted early this week after receiving an email from a staff member. The timeline of this event began on August 2nd.

The email, received from a staff member, alleged that the "university leadership is asking for much more drastic action". The Provost, Deans, and Directors Committee PDDC presented plans for "accelerated "Optimisation" of courses across the University. All Faculties were asked, **"to review all small courses and programmes with the expectation that some cuts will be made, based on a set of pre-determined criteria."**

The biggest point that drove students' anxiety from the communication was the alleged declaration that all undergraduate courses with enrolments under sixty, including some small postgraduate courses, would be "in scope" of cuts.

"This does not mean that all small courses will automatically be cut, but it does mean that we need to think innovatively about how to reshape our curricula..."

The email intended to restructure courses to help realign curricula to deliver fewer courses in a given year. The email noted the urgency for staff to act "extremely quickly to reduce the number of courses we are teaching, certainly for 2026".

"We are assured by University leadership that this initiative is driven entirely by curriculum priorities, timetabling difficulties and workload concerns, and is in no way intended as a means of reducing staff. As we have said throughout this process, our own focus within the

Faculty has been to protect subjects and to protect jobs, and we will continue to do the best we can to meet those goals.

...We don't have much detail about how it will be actioned or what criteria will be used to protect subjects and courses with small enrolments, but we are committed to protecting the academic integrity of the programmes we offer as far as possible within the institutional directives."

Students levied diverse action across the student body. Letters were sent to the University, and feedback was delivered. AUSA was also quick to move alongside students to support them in seeking an audience. On August 5th, the University found discrepancies in the email excerpt and the information provided at the Student Council last month. These inconsistencies in information have since led AUSA to request a meeting with the Provost to clarify on the University's intentions and what the "set of pre-determined criteria" is for course cuts. A decision will be made as a result of the meeting as to what action AUSA will take. This meeting took place on Wednesday, August 7th, two days later.

Requesting further information, the news team enquired about the details of the meeting between the University and AUSA, and the present standing of the issue. We were provided with the following statement:

"We have been given reassurances that it is not a "blanket" or binary rule that every course under a certain number of enrolments will all be automatically scrapped, which is what was initially feared I believe. We have been told that this is a process that ALL the faculties are going through and have been reassured that the University is committed to protecting smaller courses and disciplines as it wants to continue its comprehensive offering of courses, particularly in areas such as humanities, so that will be a consideration in any "review" of courses.

[AUSA would] like to make it clear [it] is absolutely opposed to cutting of smaller courses and we will continue to remain a strong advocate for the protection of our smaller disciplines. We must do everything to protect these important offerings and we will be doing just that."

This comment was provided prior to AUSA's official statement, due to be announced within the next twenty-four hours of the publishing of this article. Current and detailed information can be found on their social media platforms linked below.



AUSA
INSTAGRAM



ALAN WU

Student Body Rallies to Protect Student Courses

We are grateful to have managed to fit in commentary on some of the experiences behind the scenes as students rallied together following the initial confusion of the University's staff communication. Students, course representatives, and even staff moved together to make our student voice known to the University. Credit is also due to the Arts Scholars Community, which has supported students throughout the process. The names of respondents to this interview have been anonymised to protect their privacy. Alongside emails, students were also moved to submit their feedback to a Google document. The link to this document can be found in the original Reddit post and can be accessed via the QR Code provided below. Responses from the students and staff are below.

1. What was the most difficult part of this process?

B: "A lack of information. This matter was brought to our attention by staff members who were concerned that students weren't being consulted. Every piece of information we have received thus far has been secondhand: from concerned staff, as a result of our referral to the AUSA, or communication from the TEU (also received second-hand through staff). As far as I am aware, the UoA has yet to release any information to the student body about this course-cutting process."

N: "The most difficult part of this process has been the conflicting information that has been communicated to various faculties and AUSA by the university management. This has created huge amounts of uncertainty and stress. It does not follow the UoA's respect and integrity protocols set out in Taumata Teitei."

2. How did the Arts Scholars Community support you?

B: "Our community has come together in a big way! Yes, there is a concern for Art Scholars being cut, but we recognise that this is a broader university issue. Courses across all faculties are at risk, not just Arts. We have collaborated on many student-led initiatives to inform the student body and gather feedback."

K: "The arts scholars community has been my primary source of information and has guided me through the situation; a role that should've been fulfilled by the university. I greatly appreciate the amazing souls that are working so hard behind

the scenes so we can be heard."

3. Are there any other issues that students have been attempting to raise with staff prior to this incident?

K: "There has been a general disregard for student voice even before this incident. This isn't the first time that this has happened; decisions earlier this year to merge several facilities into a new faculty lacked student input. The feedback survey form was not sent out until the day of the deadline for feedback submission. I only received the email 30 minutes before the deadline."

N: "Students and staff have been blindsided before regarding course cuts, staff cuts, and so-called rationalisation. It's super unethical and creates divisions and uncertainty within the university."

Anonymous Staff Feedback on the Issue

"Sudden", "Abrute".

"No student voice."

"No clear academic rationale."

"Details around operational drivers like timetabling and room constraints have not been communicated; therefore, there is no room to address them via other means."

"Senior Management seems to be labouring under the assumption that students want less choice. This messaging does not align with the empirical evidence I have seen, which reflects that students want more choice."

"Senior Management has been inconsistent about their justifications for these measures, giving different information to the difficult faculties."



ORIGINAL REDDIT POST
REGARDING COURSE
CUTS

The Definitive HISTORY OF CINEMA

More or less



OLIVER COCKER

It is commonly believed that the first to display projected moving pictures to a paying audience were the Lumière brothers in the final months of the nineteenth century. This field of scholarly literature is patently untrue because anyone can use fire to make shadow puppets and achieve the same effect. Any article that tells you otherwise is not worth your time, and you should only refer to this one because it truly is the definitive history of cinema.

It is unclear when storytellers got the big idea that some people were visual learners and decided to broaden the appeal of their works with pictures. At least one and a half millennia ago, the saubhikas of India travelled door to door with painted banners of gods that they rolled as they spoke. The world had a wide variety of these banner shows, as they were known in ancient-day Czechia, but it is generally accepted that they started in East Asia and slowly diffused to Europe.

And I have to hand it to the French, particularly, who, upon finally getting wind of this as they were decapitating some monarchs, decided only to use it for ghost stories. Phantasmagoria, a horror show, was put on by a man in hiding, Paul Philidor, so he assumed a name that no one could associate with his own: Phylidor. Regardless, his lanterns with pictures behind them would be bettered with pyrotechnics and hydraulics until we reach the aforementioned Lumière brothers.

Now, by modern standards, those first few pieces of cinema were quite rubbish. Kinetoscopes, invented by Thomas Edison and William Dickson, could not expand pictures. What I'm saying is that the machine held fifteen metres of film, which could only be viewed by one person at a time and weighed half a tonne.

A year later, a German man by the name of Oskar Messter, not to be outdone by the French, came up with the glorious idea to play music alongside the pictures and also had to work out how to make the movie play at a steady rate so that they would sync up. It was at this point that the rich of society started to pay notice, having previously dismissed of it as "low-brow working-class nonsense-stuff."

So much so they were willing to put money into it, and Hollywood was born. Who knew Hollywood's birth was a 'who can throw more money at the screen' contest? *The Great Train Robbery* (1903) would go on to be a smash hit. With a run time of just over twelve minutes, twenty different shots in ten locations, it really fed the American Western ego. Proving once and for all that crime does pay, at least in box office receipts.

This would only be bolstered by the Miles Brothers, who opened the world's first Blockbuster-like video exchange company. This would be followed up by the Nickelodeon, the world's first movie theatre, founded by a baseball player in Pennsylvania. As far as I can tell, there is no connection to the television channel beyond the name.

It took until the year the Titanic sunk for the first ninety-minute feature film to be developed by some Italians who just wanted to recreate the Roman empire with hundreds of extras. The 'super spectacle' came to be the norm, with every nation's film industry seeking to make longer and more involved films, with many requiring intervals in the middle to rest. Of course, that interval was only so that they could replace the projector's reel with the movie's second half, but they will always claim it was in the customer's best interest.



And then, of course, World War One happened, and it messed with a few European nations. Governments had yet to consider propaganda, but the inventors of the technology around it were not slowing down. Up to this point, you could not film for long periods on the same day because the cameras needed light at a certain angle. The invention of 'blocking some of the light' really revolutionised the industry when they got out of warfare.

The decade following, discounting the influenza that swept the globe, political instability, and the brutal suppression of anti-colonial uprisings, was pretty prosperous. A fellow named Alan Crosland had the idea to make a movie about it all, following a *Jazz Singer*, but decided that he wanted someone to sing in the movie and invented sound films. It's unclear why anyone wants to hear jazz. It is pretty bad. Also ruined plenty of dreams of becoming a mime for children across France.

Regardless, this taught everyone that they could break boundaries if they wanted to, so a bunch of old white guys got in a room to decide what was the 'most groundbreaking film created by an old white guy' and started the Academy Awards. The first Best Picture would go to *Wings* (1929), a movie about two soldiers who shoot each other in planes because they love the same girl. Sadly, they were out of IP infringement when *Top Gun Maverick* (2022) came out.

Then, right before a second global war arrives, *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) invents colour filmography part way through shooting but does not reshoot the black and white scenes. The average person in the United Kingdom visits the cinemas once a week, and New Zealand finally has its own small-scale industry following the commercial success of *Hinemoa* (1914).

Now that the war was here, the entrepreneurial directors wanted to keep getting funding for their movies, so they signed up for propaganda shows. Realistic war dramas were all the rage during the very real war, for some reason, and so were Disney films about flying elephants and deer that get shot. At this time, some of the first famous actors got their start, with Greta Garbo of Sweden redefining beauty standards for the next century, and

Humphrey Bogart, who starred in so many films in his eight-year span that he couldn't not have inspired Nicholas Cage.

Eventually, the world recovered from fighting one enemy, so it decided to latch on to any others it could find. Science Fiction as a genre became the new fad as the paranoia of a superior army invading at any time took hold. This also meant that many people were kicked out of their national industries for not appearing patriotic enough, such as by the House Un-American Activities Committee, which kicked Charlie Chaplin out of the United States. Propaganda was no longer patriotic.

Special mention goes to Dorothy Dandridge, who became the first non-white woman to be nominated for an Academy Award a full twenty-five years after they began. Over in Japan, following the destruction of the past decade, people were starting to get back out and make art, with Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* (1954) going on to inspire every team-up movie of all time. Equally, in India, over two hundred films were being produced annually, with the Bollywood industry finally having the money to create its own stories.

Once we reach the sixties, the Documentary genre starts to take off. Observational cinema begins to draw in crowds who want to know how the rest of the world lives, with tapes made of experiences in Vietnam drawing particular interest. Ousmane Sembène was apparently particularly inspired by this

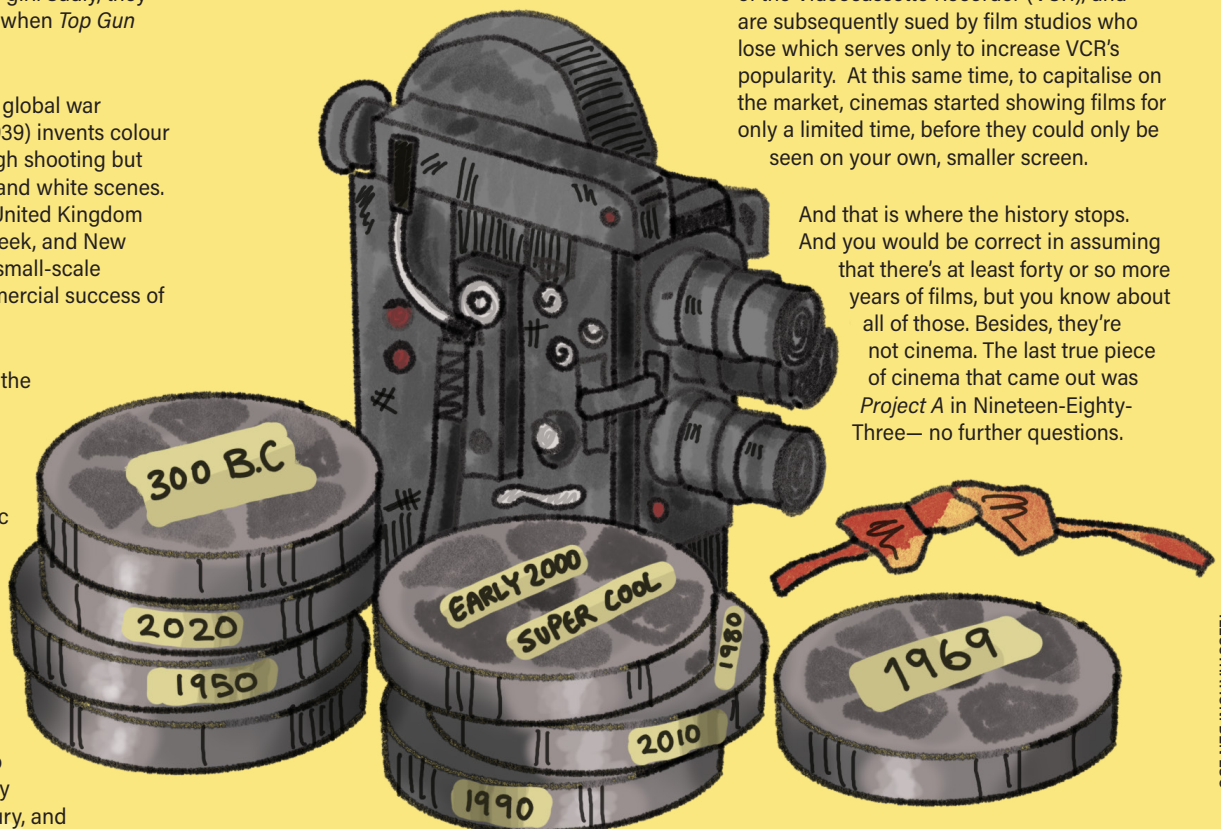
movement and produced Wolof-language films, starting up the first African film industry, attempting to bring their voices to the world. Three-Dimensional movies would also be invented for the first of many times, and last only a few years as a fad. I'm sure they'll do better next time.

Because of how used to realism the public got in that decade, in the next, directors were called on to make increasingly sexual and gory films. The modern slasher and action films all have their roots in the movement of this time. However, the most important movement of the time was the 'auteur' technique, in which the filmmaker was given total unrestricted control over every moving part of the film. This led to very successful movies, including the first *Exorcist* (1973) and *The Godfather* (1972), but a man named Michael Cimino took it too far with *Heaven's Gate* (1980) and collapsed a film studio.

Now, studios were increasingly worried about what the public wanted. Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975) and Lucas' *Star Wars* (1977) told executives that all that was needed was special effects and a very large budget. This had no important ramifications on cinema that you need to concern yourself with beyond the fact that disaster films depicting weather events and other shark-related phenomena became an entire genre. That being said, the worldwide appeal of Bruce Lee and martial arts films allowed some studios to keep their operating budgets down and learn to skim money from actors and writers.


With television's popularity growing over the previous years, some clever folk have the idea to create home video in the form of the Videocassette Recorder (VCR), and are subsequently sued by film studios who lose which serves only to increase VCR's popularity. At this same time, to capitalise on the market, cinemas started showing films for only a limited time, before they could only be seen on your own, smaller screen.

And that is where the history stops. And you would be correct in assuming that there's at least forty or so more years of films, but you know about all of those. Besides, they're not cinema. The last true piece of cinema that came out was *Project A* in Nineteen-Eighty-Three— no further questions.



ARE YOU IMMUNE TO PROPAGANDA?

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE USE OF PROPAGANDA FILMS



REEMA ARSILAN

Propaganda in film refers specifically to movies that are made in order to disseminate or validate certain ideas to sway public opinion. This involves manipulation of the audience to further an agenda or cause viewers to take action. Propaganda and film have often gone hand in hand throughout modern history, and today is no different, although it may not be so easy for us to spot for a number of reasons.

One of the earliest films made with a deliberate propagandistic message was a Romanian film called *Independența României* and subtitled *The Romanian-Russo-Turkish War 1877*. This was a silent film made in 1912 and was meant to sway public opinion in favour of entering the first Balkan War. More famously, another early propaganda film was *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), which was an American film depicting partially historical and partially fictional events. The film portrays African Americans (white actors in blackface) in extreme racist stereotypes, while depicting the Klu Klux Klan as the heroes.

During World War I governments' use of film varied between nations. Germany mobilised their film industry towards the war effort, and launched a film campaign in the US to influence public opinion. Britain did the same, creating the War Office Cinematograph Committee in 1916. During the interwar period, the Soviet government sponsored the film industry to create propaganda films to spread communist ideology. Meanwhile, Nazi filmmakers created emotional films about the plight of Germans.

During World War II Nazis had complete control of the German film industry with Joseph Goebbels heading the Reich Ministry for People's Enlightenment and Propaganda. This produced a number of explicit propaganda films, such as *The Eternal Jew* (*Der ewige Jude*, 1940), an antisemitic film in the guise of a factual documentary, and *Triumph of the Will* (1935), a film about a Nazi Party rally. In the US, the government sponsored films, such as a seven part series called *Why We Fight* (1942-1945).

During the Cold War the US government made a number of anti-communist "education" documentaries. The USSR similarly disseminated propaganda films.

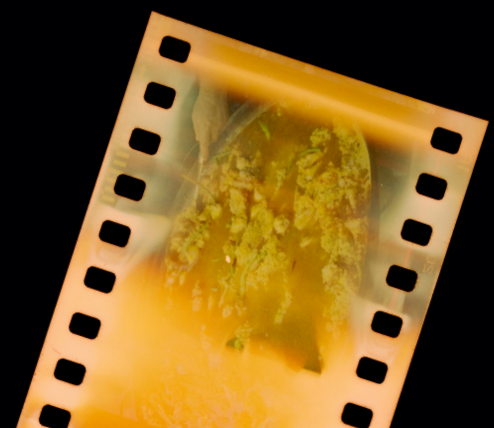
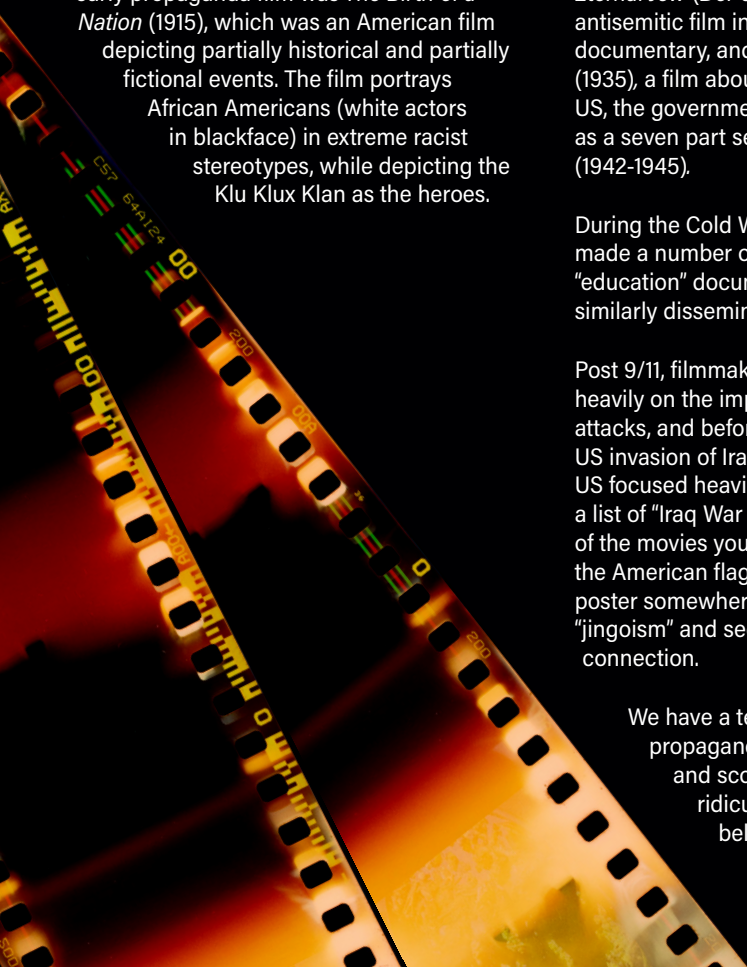
Post 9/11, filmmakers in the US focused heavily on the impacts of the terrorist attacks, and before, during and after the US invasion of Iraq a lot of films in the US focused heavily on patriotism. Google a list of "Iraq War films" and about 50% of the movies you see pop up will have the American flag incorporated into the poster somewhere. Then Google the term "jingoism" and see if you can make a connection.

We have a tendency to look at propaganda throughout history and scoff, because it can seem ridiculous what people believed, or what had the

power to influence people. But if you take a step back, you'll realise that the same thing occurs in our media today. Perhaps not so explicitly, to us, but bias in film is certainly there if you look. Just looking at action movies, note how Cold War era films so often have a Russian villain, and post 9/11 films often have an Arab Muslim villain. Is this just a bias, or propaganda?

However you're defining the term propaganda in film, it's undeniable that modern film still has some aspect of propaganda to it, whether or not you put certain movies under that label. The US military famously allows use of equipment and will work with filmmakers, with production agreements allowing the DoD to review and request changing the script. For example, the US Navy has a file on the film *Lone Survivor* (2013)—which is 2 hours of heavy handed jingoism, but I digress—and were tangibly responsible for changes to the script.

Ultimately, no one is immune to propaganda. There are all kinds of influences in our culture and in our media that shape the way that we think, and quite often we aren't provided all of the information on a subject. That's why it's so important to think critically about the media we consume. "Sometimes the curtains are just blue" rhetoric has done so much damage to media literacy and critical thought, although these skills are just as important today as they were throughout history.



Bollywood Taught Me How to Love



KAAVYA GHOSHAL

Bollywood *knows* how to love. How to love someone, love music, dance, your family, and yourself. Everything I've learnt about love has been through sitting in my bedroom, watching Bollywood movies—and here's why.

Bollywood is *known* for its romance. Even if a movie has absolutely nothing to do with romance, it will somehow have a romantic subplot that you will inevitably get more invested in than the actual plot itself, and that is the power of Bollywood. *No one* can portray the power of love like Bollywood movies do, and there are so many reasons for this. First, there's something about declarations of love in Hindi that convey messages that English simply cannot. *Pyaar toh bahut log karte hain, lekin mere jaisa pyaar koi nahin kar sakta, kyunki kisi ke paas tum jo nahin ho* (A lot of people love, but no one can love like me because no one else has you). The translations struggle to do justice to the beauty and power that our language holds, and the impact that it has on these moments. There's something about hearing a declaration of love in Hindi, with a slow tune playing in the background, that makes me cry like no English film can ever do. Bollywood is also known to be conservative. While it's evolving now, even a mere kiss would be a rare occurrence on screen—which means that the intense, unforgettable love that you see on screen is present without even *needing* any physical touch. The power of love is conveyed through a combination of actions and language, and a kiss means *everything* and isn't something that is shown "just because". A hug seems to last forever, and a brush of one finger generates emotions within the viewer that a sex scene absolutely could not. Maybe Bollywood made me unrealistic about love—I now expect to be chased after on a moving train (and I'll never change my mind).

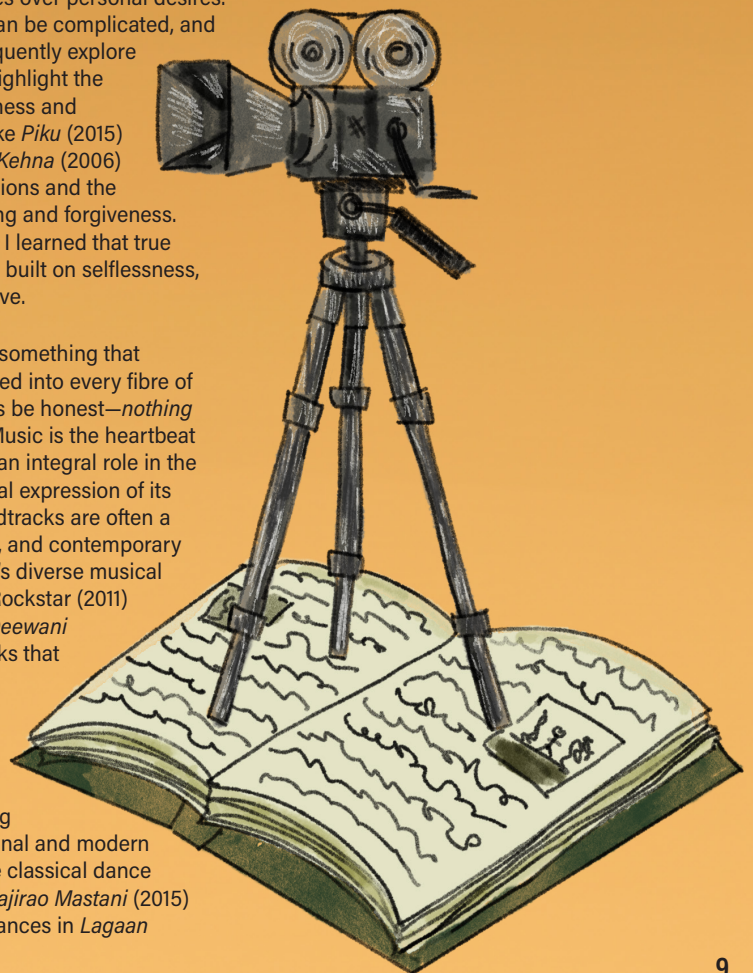
At its root, Indian culture is about family. Despite how sickeningly romantic Bollywood movies are, family love is something that overpowers romantic love any day. To put it simply—nothing, and no one, will ever be more important than family, and these movies represent this very concept. Whenever I watch English movies where the protagonist chooses to be with someone despite their family's objections, it blows my mind. Movies

like *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* (2001) and *Hum Saath-Saath Hain* (1999) beautifully portray families that stand by each other through thick and thin and emphasise that family is a constant in our lives, providing unwavering support regardless of the circumstances. The characters in these stories demonstrate how familial love can be a source of immense strength, helping individuals overcome life's challenges. Many Bollywood narratives, such as *Baghban* (2003) and *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995), revolve around the sacrifices family members make for each other, depicting parents sacrificing their dreams and comforts for the well-being of their children and siblings going to great lengths to have each other's backs. Through these stories, I learned that true family bonds are often built on selflessness and the willingness to prioritise the needs of loved ones over personal desires. Family relationships can be complicated, and Bollywood movies frequently explore these dynamics and highlight the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation. Films like *Piku* (2015) and *Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna* (2006) delve into familial tensions and the journey towards healing and forgiveness. Through these stories, I learned that true family bonds are often built on selflessness, and love—so much love.

Loving your culture is something that Bollywood has ingrained into every fibre of my being because let's be honest—*nothing* beats Indian culture. Music is the heartbeat of Bollywood, playing an integral role in the narrative and emotional expression of its films. Bollywood soundtracks are often a blend of classical, folk, and contemporary music, reflecting India's diverse musical heritage. Movies like *Rockstar* (2011) and *Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani* (2013) have soundtracks that are truly unforgettable and convey emotions that words cannot. Dance sequences are another hallmark of Bollywood, showcasing a wide array of traditional and modern dance forms. From the classical dance styles in movies like *Bajirao Mastani* (2015) to the energetic folk dances in *Lagaan*

(2001), Bollywood celebrates India's dance heritage. The elaborate choreography, colourful costumes, and grand settings in these dance numbers are a visual feast that celebrates the joy, festivity, and cultural diversity of India. India is a land of immense diversity, and Bollywood films often mirror this multicultural tapestry. Movies like *My Name is Khan* (2010) and *Gully Boy* (2019) explore the lives of individuals from different religious, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, emphasising the unity in diversity. These films portray various festivals, customs, and ways of life, showing the audience the beauty of India's pluralistic society.

Bollywood movies are a celebration of Indian culture in all its richness and diversity, and if you are so lucky to watch them, I hope you find them as mesmerising as I do!



CINEMA AS A REFLECTION OF CHANGING TIMES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS



MIKE CROSS

Cinema has long served as a mirror to society, reflecting the hopes, fears, and anxieties of its time. As environmental concerns have increasingly permeated public consciousness, films have evolved to reflect these shifting attitudes, both as speculative warnings and dystopian visions of a future shaped by ecological collapse. This article explores the intersection of cinema and environmental consciousness, tracing how films have adapted to and influenced the changing zeitgeist as society grapples with the realities of climate change and resource scarcity.

In the early to mid-20th century, environmental themes in cinema were largely speculative, often explored through the lens of science fiction. These films offered a way to push boundaries and reflect humanity's belief in its ability to control the environment, a sentiment born out of the technological optimism of the post-war era. In the early days of *Star Trek*, for example, it was easier to get away with the first American televised interracial kiss when it was between a white alien and a black woman during a time when segregation and its aftereffects still gripped the United States.

One of the most significant films of this era is Andrei Tarkovsky's *Stalker* (1979), based on the novel *Roadside Picnic* by Soviet-Russian authors Arkady and Boris Strugatsky. Set in the mysterious "Zone" where the laws of nature are altered, the film delves into the philosophical and ethical implications of humanity's desire to control the environment. The Zone acts as a metaphor for the unpredictable consequences of tampering with nature, a theme that resonates with the nascent environmental movement of the time. Tarkovsky's portrayal of the Zone as both a place of danger and spiritual revelation reflects the era's ambivalence towards technological progress as a tool for both creation and destruction.

Similarly, *Logan's Run* (1976) shows a vision of the future where technology has solved many of humanity's problems, but at a significant cost. The film is set in a domed city where the inhabitants live a hedonistic lifestyle, unaware that their freedom is constrained by the need to maintain ecological balance. The film's depiction of a society that enforces population control through ritualistic execution at the age of 30 reflects growing concerns about overpopulation and resource depletion. In *Logan's Run*, the utopian vision of a technologically advanced society is undermined by the dystopian reality of its underlying ecological fragility.

These early films set the stage for the evolving environmental narrative in cinema, which would become more urgent and pessimistic as real-world concerns about pollution, deforestation, and climate change began to take hold.

The 1980s and 1990s saw a marked increase in environmental consciousness, both in society and in cinema. This period was characterised by a growing awareness of the fragility of the natural world and the consequences of human activity, leading to a shift in how environmental themes were portrayed on screen.

Blade Runner (1982), directed by Ridley Scott, is set in a dystopian future where the environment has been ravaged by industrialization. Set in a perpetually dark and rain-soaked Los Angeles, the film's visual aesthetic reflects the environmental degradation that has become a defining feature of the world. The film's depiction of a world where nature has been almost entirely replaced by artificiality serves as a powerful commentary on the consequences of unchecked technological progress. The environmental decay in *Blade Runner* echoes the growing concerns of the 1980s, a decade marred by high-profile environmental disasters like the Chernobyl nuclear meltdown and the Exxon Valdez oil spill.



The theme of human hubris and its impact on the environment is further explored in Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* (1993). Although not explicitly about climate change, the film addresses the ethical implications of genetic manipulation and the consequences of playing god with nature. The chaos that ensues when dinosaurs are brought back to life on an isolated island serves as a metaphor for the unforeseen consequences of scientific advancement. The film's narrative, where humanity's attempt to control and commodify nature leads to disaster, reflects the growing skepticism of the 1990s about the ability of technology to solve environmental problems without creating new ones. This skepticism would become a central theme in later environmental films as the reality of climate change became more apparent.

The Mad Max Saga: A Reflection of Global Panic

The *Mad Max* saga, which began in 1979 and continues to this day, offers a unique lens through which to view the evolution of environmental themes in cinema. Each instalment in the series reflects the global anxieties of its time, particularly in relation to resource scarcity and political instability.

The original *Mad Max* (1979) and its sequel *Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior* (1981) were products of the late 1970s, a period marked by the global oil crisis and the resulting economic turmoil. The films are set in a post-apocalyptic world where the collapse of society is directly linked to the scarcity of fuel, a theme that resonated deeply with audiences during a time when the world was grappling with the implications of its dependence on finite resources. The desolate landscapes and the brutal, survivalist mentality of the characters in

Mad Max reflect the fears of a society on the brink of collapse, driven by the twin forces of resource depletion and political instability.

By the time *Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome* (1985) was released, the series had evolved to reflect the broader concerns of the Cold War era. The film introduces the concept of Bartertown, a society built on the remnants of a collapsed civilization, where resources are scarce and power is concentrated in the hands of a few. The film's depiction of a world where survival depends on control of scarce resources reflects the anxieties of the time, particularly the fear of nuclear conflict and the potential for global catastrophe. The Thunderdome, where conflicts are settled through violent gladiatorial combat, serves as a metaphor for the zero-sum mentality that defined the geopolitics of the era.

The more recent instalment in the series, *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015), takes these themes even further, presenting a world where environmental collapse has led to the near-total destruction of civilization. Released during a period of growing awareness about climate change, water scarcity, and the global refugee crisis, *Fury Road* depicts a world where survival hinges on control of water—a scarce and precious resource. The film's emphasis on the consequences of ecological disaster and the brutal, lawless society that emerges in its wake resonates with modern concerns about the potential for climate change to create similar conditions in our world.

The *Mad Max* saga, with its evolving depiction of a world ravaged by environmental collapse and resource scarcity, serves as a powerful reflection of the global anxieties that have shaped its production. Each film in the series offers a glimpse into the fears and concerns of its time, providing a narrative framework that has become increasingly relevant as the realities of climate change and environmental degradation have become more apparent.

The turn of the millennium marked a significant shift in the portrayal of environmental themes in cinema. As the scientific consensus on climate change solidified and the effects of global warming became more visible, films began to adopt a more urgent, apocalyptic tone.

An Inconvenient Truth (2006) is described by some as the most influential environmental documentary of the 21st century. Directed by Davis Guggenheim and featuring former U.S. Vice President Al Gore, the film brought the issue of climate change into mainstream consciousness. Through a combination of scientific evidence, personal anecdotes, and stark visual imagery, *An Inconvenient Truth* presented the sobering case for the reality of global warming and the urgent need for action. The film's impact was profound, sparking debates, influencing policy, and inspiring a wave of environmental activism around the world that was still ignored by the global masses. The success of *An Inconvenient Truth* reflects a growing recognition that climate change is not just a distant possibility, but an immediate threat that requires urgent action.

TIKI TOURING MĀORI CINEMA

REPRESENTATION OR MISINFORMATION



BLAZE WEBSTER

In contrast to the documentary's factual approach, fiction films during this era often depicted climate change in more dramatic, sometimes sensationalised ways. *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) presents a scenario where global warming triggers a series of catastrophic natural disasters, leading to a new ice age. While the film's depiction of climate change is scientifically implausible, its portrayal of sudden, catastrophic environmental collapse resonated with audiences who were increasingly aware of the fragility of the natural world. The popularity of *The Day After Tomorrow* reflects a cultural shift towards viewing environmental disaster as an imminent, unavoidable event—an attitude that has only intensified in the years since.

2012, on the other hand, capitalised on public fears about the end of the world, spurred by interpretations of the Mayan calendar. The film is a spectacle of global destruction, featuring earthquakes, tsunamis, and other natural disasters triggered by climate change and other environmental factors. While the film is scientifically implausible, its portrayal of sudden, catastrophic environmental collapse resonated with audiences' deep-seated anxieties about the fragility of the natural world. The exaggerated disaster scenarios serve as a stark reminder of the potential consequences of ignoring environmental issues, tapping into the collective fear of an uncontrollable and apocalyptic future.

Cinema and television have played a crucial role in shaping public consciousness and influencing the zeitgeist. By reflecting the anxieties, hopes, and evolving understanding of environmental issues, films and TV shows have the power to raise awareness, inspire action, and foster a deeper connection to the natural world.

The visual and narrative power of cinema allows for the dramatisation of complex environmental issues, making them more accessible and emotionally resonant for a broad audience. Films like *An Inconvenient Truth* have the capacity to translate scientific data into compelling stories that can reach people on an emotional level, spurring activism and policy change. Similarly, fictional narratives such as *Blade Runner* and *Mad Max* provide imaginative spaces where audiences can explore the consequences of environmental degradation, often serving as cautionary tales that underscore the urgency of addressing these issues in the real world.

Moreover, the ability of cinema and TV to depict both the dystopian potential and the beauty of the natural world can inspire a sense of wonder and responsibility. Documentaries showcasing the wonders of nature can foster a sense of stewardship, while apocalyptic visions can highlight the dire need for action to prevent such futures. This dual capacity to both warn and inspire makes cinema a powerful tool in the fight for environmental sustainability.

As society continues to grapple with the realities of climate change, resource depletion, and ecological collapse, the role of cinema and television in shaping public consciousness will only grow in importance. By continuing to reflect and influence the zeitgeist, films and TV shows can help to mobilise collective action, inspire individual responsibility, and ultimately contribute to the creation of a more sustainable and resilient world.

Movies, documentaries, short-films and more are a great way to share a story. There is a lot of build-up for some films now-a-days, but I don't see much hype around Māori cinema. That got me thinking, do movies have accurate depictions of Māori culture? Or is misinformation twisted with a negative viewpoint all we see? Of course all movies are dramatic to promote audience engagement, but some are deforming the narrative of a few tales. I have explored a few movies ranging in popularity and premiere dates.

ONCE WE WERE WARRIORS (1994)

Is an adaptation of a 1990 novel that was strongly influenced by Alan Duff's personal life. This movie has violent and triggering themes; it is not for the lighthearted. *Once we were warriors* follows a low-income Māori whānau that faces poverty, hardships and crimes. The story is intense and can be deeply impactful. The story can represent many Māori communities' challenges and socioeconomic struggles, but can also reinforce the negative stereotypes about Māori people. There is a depiction where it seems that Māori support violence and abuse, that Māori's always party and drink while disregarding their children, that they live in slums and in poverty and more. However, it is true that Māori communities are more vulnerable to horrible living environments and are put through a lot of hardship. There are some ideals that have not aged well, but this demonstrates how far we come; even though we still can improve further. You can watch it on TVNZ+ or Netflix.

UPROAR (2023)

Is a coming of age film that takes on a comedic side. This film accompanies a 17-year-old boy in 1981 through his journey of self-discovery in his talents and culture. The protagonist grew up in his brother's shadow because he was a

successful rugby player until he had an injury. His whānau was very much into rugby and wanted him to go into it as well. However, his heart was with acting and singing. Through his interest in the arts he grows closer to his culture. *Uproar* shows a large pride of Māori culture and identity, even when you did not grow up in a Māori community. This film has a good representation of self-exploration within a child with Māori roots.

There are many great Māori films that I did not talk about. You should definitely explore them! I for sure understand that not all films that have Māori culture are trying to spread misleading information. Some great watches are *Whale Rider* (2002), *Cousins* (2021), *Waru* (2017), *Mahana* (2016) and *Ngati* (1987).

It is key to approach Māori cinema with openness and a critical eye. Some films may have outdated and or false information to suit the narrative of that time. However, many films do provide education and authenticity around Māori culture, language, experience, and community. As the audience, we have a responsibility to support films that accurately share information and represent correctly.



ILLUSTRATION: BEN LUO

A personal confession on filmmaking after watching Michael Powell's

PEEPING TOM

TREVOR PRONOSO

This is not one of my typical film review pieces, but rather a much needed exhale on the certain preoccupations, perspectives and personal philosophies I've developed on cinema and its practice over the past two years or so. I don't expect any of these views to remain as steadfast and rigidly dogmatic as to who I am and my relationship to film in the long term. But what the past four years of being a movie addict cycling through the phases and oeuvres of countless auteurs (From Bergman to Tsai to Straub-Huillet to Farocki to Frampton to Godard currently) have taught me is that malleability is a virtue, and I'll gladly welcome the next crucial obsession and that comes my way in the future.

I've always struggled to muster up the courage to just pick up a camera and film the things around me.

I have a lot of friends who are filmmakers. They also know how to operate the camera. They know the mechanical insides and outs, f-stops, exposure triangles and what not. I'd always see them eager to point their cameras and shoot the things that pique their interest. Maybe they have some compositional appeal, some ephemeral quality that needs to be documented, or maybe it reminds them of something in the past, a memory they want to recapture. And maybe after exploring the ends of the earth having a wealth of footage at their disposal, they now make the crucial decision:

How do I combine these into a single film, or at least how should one arrange these footage into a specific sequence/structure that involves cutting up certain parts of the footage to fit said structure, and how do I know such qualities/

emotions/meanings one has felt during the periods they have taken the photo can be perfectly translated back into the sequence?

But even before the editing, even before pointing the camera, one already has some unconscious plan, or instinct, desire, to see filmmaking as a tool to fulfil that want. The drive "to be"; the artist's unspoken code of conduct, or that Wayne Gretzky quote: you miss 100% of the shots you don't take. We're driven to film everything, as much as we can.

And now you're at the editing room. You review the footage, already in a state of conscious discrimination: what's good material and what's not. Sometimes the spark from actually filming it suddenly disappears after rewatching it: it's underexposed, the sky isn't in frame, the objects are positioned too far left, it's out of focus, the birds ruin the linear composition. The audio peaks too often.

You end up turning into a Woody Allen, a spoiled brat who's struggling to reconcile the images in his head with the images before him. Everything's shot within the parameters, there's ample creative freedom, but you're still dissatisfied.

That's when I realised how selfish and self-serving this art of "filmmaking" could become.

Why is it that we hold this filmmaking profession up on a pedestal? We idolise certain filmmakers like Kubrick, known for their uncompromising style of work, as if the artist's vision takes precedence over the people around you. We'll never know how different the film would've been

if he'd have stopped on the 5th take, but we still consider such individualist authoritarianism touted as the apotheosis of the craft.

People don't last forever, but we convince ourselves that film does.

And once in the editing room, once we collect all our travel footage all over Asia, Europe, South America, with all these different landmarks, natural landscapes, people from different walks of life, we have this nagging feeling that this isn't enough.

Instead you go to your trusty friend Kevin McLeod and add some serene background music to accompany the images because deep down inside, the images don't really speak to you, they don't really mean that much outside of their aesthetics. We further filter down the image with a guiding hand, a blunting emotional affect to ease the impenetrable image into something familiar, safe, censored, disfigured, maimed, unrecognisable.

The filmmaker artistically 'manifests destiny', taking bits and pieces of everything and warping them until it's transformed into something self-fulfilling.

We approve of the image as it reaffirms our values and ways of seeing. The initial footage proved challenging, unfamiliar, provocative, and thus tamed to the whims of your desire. It all seems like egoistic posturing and deliberate destruction if nothing in the film was left up to chance, left up to some degree of non-determinism. The images aren't autonomous anymore, and by extension, the things outside of us as we are filming them don't have the privilege to exist on their own terms. It's our film. Our vision.

Yet it's all we have... It's what I mostly have, and I become frustrated, torn, immobile.

How could I ever subject people, objects, the environment, the invisible historical subtext to my incredibly limited subjectivity, and uphold my insights as universal?

If everyone I knew and hold near and dear to my heart suddenly left off the face of the earth, and all I have are stray footage of them, looking either disinterested, happy, scared, would I be satisfied or ashamed at the thought that such a film is a mere shard of the totality of person lost forever in time, no longer available to capture again in film? I've lost the opportunity to capture that ephemera once again.

Or maybe, just maybe, we're all collectively looking at images wrong our entire lives.

Maybe it takes a certain level of honesty and self-criticism to understand film for what it truly is: a medium.

A medium between the mind and everything else outside it, rather than as an extension of the mind encroaching on others' subjectivities, truths.

It's like looking out of the window of a car, speeding down the highway in the countryside, and seeing all the fields whooshing past your gaze as you hop from one point of interest to the next. You never for one second stop to really look, to really feel anything other than obvious identification of the subject. You cycle through your footage, but you never really give the images their due unless they fit to your predetermined objectives.

A tree is never just a tree, and so are actors pretending to fit in your directorial vision.

Why bother picking up a camera if you're gonna ignore everything beyond the camera's frame? Why bother if it's merely a tool for voyeuristic catharsis?

The camera 'distorts' reality, rather than piercing it, interrogating it. Images have histories, unspoken wounds, scars, moments

of happiness, relationships, but most of us aren't able to see it amidst our quests for artistic truncation and edification.

Peeping Tom is the greatest foil against the satiating kitsch of Hitchcock's *Psycho*. Are we ready to reckon with the social responsibilities of the filmmaker?

As Susan Sontag puts it best in her book *On Photography*:

Photography is the reality; the real object is often experienced as a letdown. Photographs make normative an experience of art that is mediated, second-hand, intense in a different way.

CLUBS COLUMN

CHECK OUT THESE THREE COOL CLUBS ON CAMPUS, COME BACK FOR NEW CLUBS EACH ISSUE.



AUCKLAND UNIVERSITY CANOE CLUB

AUCC is an amazing club for anyone who wants to try something new, active, social, and cheap! AUCC specialises in the sport of Whitewater Kayaking and we travel all around New Zealand to get you to some of the prettiest, most scenic places in New Zealand that are only accessible by the river. NO EXPERIENCE REQUIRED! We love taking newbies who are motivated to try something new! Equipped with the largest fleet of any Uni canoe club, and with instructors that are experienced and trained in safety and first aid, we're one of the most professional outdoor clubs out there. We meet weekly for social and kayak events, and hold big weekend trips every few weeks. Don't miss out on trying out the best outdoor sport!



PRE-VOCATIONAL OBSTETRICS & GYNAECOLOGY SOCIETY (PVOGS)

PVOGS is an organisation affiliated with the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists dedicated to fuelling medical students and RMOs' interest in O&G. Join our hands-on workshop at the PVOGS ANZ Women's Health Conference in July and stay tuned to our socials for more events!



AUCKLAND UNIVERSITY STUDENT CHOIR

AU Student choir is a relaxed, social, all-comers choir who come together each week to socialise and rehearse choral pieces. Our concerts are typically in collaboration with AUSCO (the string orchestra), and UniBand (the concert band). We practise from 6:15-8:30 on Wednesday nights in the School of Music.

THE RISE OF THE ANTI-HEROINE

THE DICHTOMY OF NO FUCKS GIVEN

MAHEK NAGAR

"I have a horrible feeling that I'm a greedy, perverted, selfish, apathetic, cynical, depraved, morally bankrupt woman who can't even call herself a feminist."

- Fleabag

Let's backtrack a little bit.

The modern anti-hero is a reflection of mistrust in the values of traditional heroes. They challenge the status quo in some way or another. They don't just fight, they rebel. These characters often emerge from a place of personal struggle, embodying a complexity that traditional heroes lack. A traumatic past meshed with some sardonic humour and a dubious conscience of mind makes us—as an audience—want to root for them. So what if they tripped the old lady crossing the street? As long as they helped save the world, it is all that matters. Their brooding demeanours and the violence they commit, may make them complicated, challenging, but not necessarily unlikeable. We can put ourselves in their shoes and understand the decisions they make, even if we don't actually agree with them ourselves.

So obviously, I am a fan.

I don't believe that one person can be completely virtuous, nor is one person wholly abhorrent. This is why there is nothing more frustrating than watching a Manichean character, and nothing makes me feel more seen than watching a character with, well, character.

Enter the anti-heroine. Laced with the same basic premise as an anti-hero in theory, the inception of it is where we start to deviate from the ground thumping ideology that we live in a post feminist world. You see, an anti-hero ploughs through personal and systemic pressures; an anti-heroine has an added load of societal expectations to cater to. These expectations don't just formulate off of some penis politics, but rather from our own internalised contempt. All of our contempt.

Take Harley Quinn. In *Suicide Squad* (2016), Harley Quinn, portrayed by Margot Robbie, shares many characteristics with Deadpool—violence, humor, a complex backstory—yet she is often criticized for being 'too crazy' or 'over-sexualized'. In *Birds of Prey* (2020),

we see her breaking free from her toxic relationship with the Joker and asserting her independence. Harley was initially created as a mere extension of the Joker, her identity tethered to his narrative. In stark contrast, and maybe more fitting with the times then, anti-hero 'merc-with-a-mouth' Deadpool was given the freedom to exist on his own terms from the very beginning. Deadpool's creators, Fabian Nicieza and Rob Liefeld, may have had the long overdue realisation that women characters could and very much should stand on their own (complex, messy, and real), BUT—dare I say—I feel general audiences still lag behind. If I see one more review of Harley's entire personality being the "crazy ex-girlfriend" while our friend Deadpool enjoys their standalone character arc (rightfully so), I might just take a baseball bat to that head.

A lot of critics seem to think that *Fleabag* (2016-2019), as a show, is 'bad feminism'. The case against what people have been calling 'Fleabag feminism' or 'dissociative feminism' is that the show moves away from complaining about or acting against oppression to passively wallowing in it, or laughing at it with deadpan humour. This critique completely misses the mark on what makes *Fleabag* revolutionary. The show's brilliance lies in its refusal to sanitise or simplify the female experience. *Fleabag*'s feminism isn't about rallying against external forces with grand gestures but about the internal struggle and the messy reality of being a modern woman. The deadpan humour and moments of self-reflection aren't signs of

passivity but rather tools for survival and self-understanding. Her narrative resonates because it acknowledges the contradictions and imperfections inherent in everyone's life. It's a reminder that feminism isn't one-size-fits-all; it's multifaceted. Or like in true *Fleabag* fashion, one dry smirk at a time.

Maeve from *Sex Education* (2019-2023) is a deeply complex character. Her father left when she was very young. Her mother is a drug addict who abandoned her and was also arrested for drug dealing. Otis grapples with his own set of issues, such as his awkwardness, his complicated relationship with his overbearing mother, Jean, and his struggles with intimacy. Otis's indecisiveness and mistakes in his love life are seen as part of his journey to maturity, while Maeve's similar actions are viewed as evidence of her being problematic or 'difficult'.

To reiterate, none of these characters accurately represent the wider cultural demographic of the world. Harley Quinn's chaotic rebellion, *Fleabag*'s self-destructive humour, and Maeve's sharp wit are all rooted in socio-economic contexts that don't translate to a global audience. Characters like Nola Darling from *She's Gotta Have It* (1986) and Issa Dee from *Insecure* (2016-2021) do encompass and offer wider spectrums of experiences, intersecting race, gender, and economic status. Yet, all of these characters collectively challenge the notion that a woman's experience needs to



align with a singular narrative. Despite the cycle of dismissing women's stories for not fitting a certain mold, these anti-heroines unapologetically demand the world to shut the fuck up when it questions their relevance.

Viola Davis is fierce as her character in *Widows* (2018), but the audience was of the consensus that their anti-misogyny agenda overshadowed the crux of the film—the heist. Their inadvertently reducing her character to being simply 'unlikeable' for addressing societal issues head-on evidently emphasises the need to redirect the conversation back to gender and power. None of these detractors have the adequate mental capacities to even conceive of such gender nuance, nor do they have the balls to pull this off.

I guess it is quite fortunate for myself that women empowerment is, for the lack of sounding too fancy pants, hot shit.

But theory and practice are the same in theory, not in practice.

A strong female lead might no longer be a 'tick box character' but they can still be a character trapped in a box. Combine that with a questionable moral compass and the audience takes no time to mark them as unlikeable. The 2018 screening of the film *Wildlife* saw this quote in practice when a viewer branded Carey Mulligan's character Jeanette as "unsympathetic" to which the actress fired back saying that we are all too used to seeing women behaving really well in movies.

Bad women are nothing new—we see them all the time—we just aren't asked to identify with them, to understand their realities, or to offer them empathy in the ways that we have with characters portrayed by men. If we did, we might also implicitly identify with their struggles. We might root for her and want to see her succeed at dismantling the structures which oppress. These said oppressive structures are the status quo itself, unchanged by none other than ourselves.

We could delve further into this, but the beauty of these anti-heroines is that they wouldn't be so compelling if they gave a fuck about what we think of them. They're the bad guys, it's what they do.

My Favourite Movie is a PORN?!!



TIM EVANS (THEY/THEM)

So, I'm not gonna sit at my laptop writing this and pretend I'm a major cinema buff. Personally, my favourite film is *Coco* because I watched it while tipsy on a plane and also have mummy issues (surprising? no!). All this to say, the world of cinema and high film is one that your average Joe probably isn't ultra invested in and that's okay! Sometimes, a really shit Netflix original is what we all crave and I see no shame in that.

Something people tend to be more ashamed of is their consumption of porn. While you might not sit down to watch a movie all too often, you probably have your favourite pornos bookmarked for safekeeping and easy access. Pornography is something which penetrates and dominates our modern society, making up over two thirds of all internet usage in Aotearoa... I made that stat up but wasn't it fun to imagine? All this to say, people watch porn. People love porn, really, and it's time we talk about porn as a legitimate art form because to be honest, I've seen better acting in shitty 90's porn than in studio films.

So what makes porn actually so good? Why are people kind of obsessed with porn, even though they might never say it? Well, there's probably a few reasons, not least of which is the fact that people wanna see you naked. That's right, we all love a callback! This isn't the first time I've told you to monetise your sex life, and it will not be the last. Anyway, porn is one of the few art forms which is cross-disciplinary and near mass produced. I can listen to audio erotica while reading a smut novel and watch someone get stuck in their washing machine all at once. I don't want to do all that - but the point is, you can get porn anywhere and any way you want, and a lot of it is free (which is its own ethical dilemma in and of itself that I'm sure a PhD Sociologist is assessing way better than my Craccum think pieces are).

Because there's just so much porn in this world that's readily accessible, there's no doubt that you've found a specific niche or video that really does things for you. You might not have even expected to like the video of Connor Peters fucking a durian, but there's no shame that you did (right?). From search results for "real couple in love gentle" to ads for Kink.com, there really is something for everyone to enjoy and get horny to. This is thanks, in part, to the nucleated makeup of the industry, filled with small studios and individual performers building massive followings. Basically, porn as a genre fulfils your needs (in more way than one) as a viewer of film. Plus, the taboo and eroticism of it all produces a real physical response that is hard to do otherwise.

In the mainstream film industry, there is not and likely never will be the sheer amount of relatively good quality entertainment which engages the viewer in the same way that pornography does. So, when someone asks "What's your favourite movie?", maybe you could send them the link to your most recent wank bank addition and not ask them if they've heard of Quentin Tarantino. If that venn diagram is closer to a circle than it should, buy some foot pics and get a better hobby.



NZIFF

Opening Night Atmosphere Thoughts

DANIEL TANG

Towards the end of a lengthy but well-earned sequence of opening night speeches, director Josephine Stewart-Te Whiu jokingly asked that we “please don’t compare this year’s opening night premiere to last year’s premiere (Palme d’Or Winner, Anatomy of a Fall).” Setting her film aside for now, her statement signalled at the glooming asterisk across us festival-goers that Whānau Mārama had suffered losses in the lead-up to tonight. A smaller, less-hyped selection of films paired with ongoing crises across the motu and abroad reflected itself in the alive and bustling, but not quite fully booked, iconic Civic theatre. Instead of a ‘hyped’ international release, the opening night experience was buoyed by a shared love of making and viewing local cinema. Strangers in neat attire shared their cautious excitement over glasses of wine from the refreshments booth and under the stunning interior design of The Civic. Indeed, I cheered amongst the audience when Stewart-Te Whiu emphasised that this opening night film would be about freedom, friendship, resilience, and joy. In contrast to the Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage Paul Goldsmith, out of his depth speaking to an audience of Tāmaki Makaurau’s creatives and cinema lovers, Stewart-Te Whiu concluded the opening night remarks fittingly by confronting this tension head-on: “Toitū Te Tiriti” and “Ceasefire Now!”



We Were Dangerous ★★★★★ (4 out of 5)

This film is a wonderful historical dramedy on girlhood in Aotearoa with some questionable creative choices. Consistently shot with care, the film’s substantive highlight was its story-driven production design and cinematography, welcoming and defining beats of the film through costuming, lighting, colour choice, and editing. Second to the visual beauty was the acting of Erana James, Manaia Hall, and Nathalie Morris in portraying the three central girls resisting and rebelling against Christian colonialism. Although the story touches on ‘important’ topical issues like sexuality, anti-Chinese racism, and the Native Schools Act banning te reo Maori, its chief concern is with the agency of intersectionally marginalised young women and wāhine Māori. On that topic, the film handles it with a balance of absurdity-based humour and horrifying severity, understanding that sensitivity must come with a deep-rooted rage at the lives and livelihoods lost from patriarchal colonialism. However, the film chooses to scatter storybook-style narration for plot exposition, pulling us out of the rich story and overshooting lightheartedness towards ‘telling’ rather than ‘showing’. Alongside a similarly storybook-style rushed final act, *We Were Dangerous* misunderstands how best to balance its tone and structure but remains beautifully shot and consistently thought-provoking.



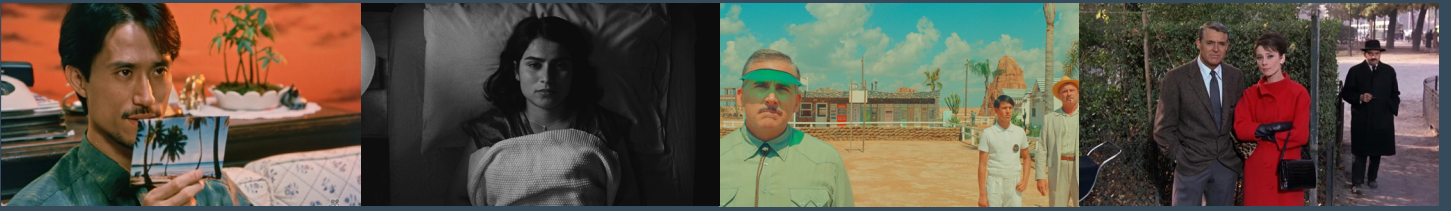
7 August 2024

1. Tami Neilson - I Never Cared For You (cover) [NZ]
2. Ocean Beach - Come Around [NZ]
3. Chase Woods - Maiden Speech [NZ]
4. Elliot & Vincent - Doberman [NZ]
5. Japes - Boys [NZ]
6. Colter Carson - Love Cave [NZ]
7. Yon Loader - Tied Up In [NZ]
8. Mystery Waitress - Pt 2. Tiger [NZ]
9. Soft Bait - No Bad Days [NZ]
10. We Will Ride Fast - Surfing The Meme Machine [NZ]



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PLAYLIST





POISSON D'AVRIL (1986)

One of the most bizarre movies I've ever seen, and of course, I recommend it: if you can get past the ick-inducing womanising portrayal of a half-Japanese French Polynesian chieftain, just a heads up. It is pretty obscure and I watched it with my friend because we are both fans of the Japanese band Yellow Magic Orchestra, and it features the band's Drummer/Vocalist, Yukihiro Takahashi, in his only lead acting role, which is a shame because his comic acting was great. His performance matches the energy of the film perfectly: lofi and charismatic but also surreal, disjointed, unhinged and manic, something which I think translates (and ages) well into our age of memes as humour. The plot itself is a fairly standard comedy of errors about a film director who hires a young actress to play his wife in order to prevent his actual spouse interacting with aforementioned womaniser. But what I'm really here for is that 80's Japanese aesthetic, plus 25+ minutes of Yukihiro Takahashi literally just walking around, shopping and cooking french food, with zero plot advancement at all. Oh and the great synth soundtrack, which you can stream online.

- Lewis Matheson Creed

FREMONT (2023)

Fremont follows the story of Donya, an Afghan refugee and former U.S. military translator, who grapples with insomnia and survivor's guilt in her new life in California. She works at a fortune cookie factory and, in a moment of impulse, secretly inserts her own messages into cookies, hoping to connect with someone. Her act of rebellion ultimately leads to unexpected human connections. The themes and politics of this film felt odd as I watched it, it felt like the director didn't really 'do enough' with them. But looking back, the lack of narrative reinforcement - and also what I initially thought

was out-of-place humour—is what made this film feel so real. The film is not here to give some heightened portrayal of mental suffering, or big moments of psychological epiphany while preaching politics, etc. Instead there are only the wordless moments alone, where thoughts form in silence—while we observers are oblivious. Real life is plain and unknown, and often just absurd and whimsical—especially at a place that is so different to the home you know.

The final shot masterfully tied all the themes together without words. It is such a powerful image of tragedy and defeat. What seems like an optimistic ending for the story gets flipped on its head by the framing. Donya stands between a broken-down car and an abandoned armchair, gazing out to the high-speed train that runs past, beyond the fence. She gazes out towards this amazing technology and wealth—which America, and now she, has access to—that came at the price of unspeakable suffering for her own country and so many more. Standing on the sidelines, on the soil of the country that destroyed hers, unable to do anything against the sheer speed and ferocity of this power, she turns back around to embrace what little individual agency she has left. Her friend told her to move on but carry the burden of suffering. Her boss told her to learn to love herself. She does so, and finally, she's able to find love for another. Yes, Donya has accepted the status quo and the story seems to suggest that's a good thing for her, because at least she's not lonely and sad etc., but the presentation of the film is fully aware of the tragic nature of the bigger picture. Just as the old cook puts it, self-fulfilment and love are just 'distractions' while her people continue to suffer in the mess left by the very country where she's able to have a safe and peaceful life now. It's her right to escape war, to have a better life. But through this shot we know and she knows that the guilt will never go away, that

it truly is a 'burden'. The powers that be still stand, and she only gets sucked deeper into their machinations as she embraces this new life. The film is a portrait of Afghan dignity and strength and joy, on a personal level—shattering the image of them being weak, vulnerable refugees forever living in the shadows of their trauma—but also Afghan frustration and powerlessness in the most pragmatic and matter-of-fact sense. The choice is either suffering or assimilation. And though no solution is offered, this awareness is the least we could ask for.

- Wang Hongtian

ASTEROID CITY (2023)

This is my favourite Wes Anderson by a long shot. He pushes his metamodernist sensibilities further than ever before both narratively and formally. What starts out as a vulnerable portrait of American existentialism eventually transcends into an elusive beyond. Just like going through grief and moving on, you can only rot in the pit of postmodernism for so long before acknowledging the void and doing your thing anyway. After all, a photographer's gotta take photographs, and Wes Anderson's gotta make cool Wes Anderson stuff.

- Wang Hongtian

CHARADE (1963)

A fun kitschy thriller that sees Audrey Hepburn fall for Cary Grant while on a skiing holiday in the Alps, but Cary Grant is actually after her secret fortune left by Hepburn's deceased husband, alongside other acquaintances of her husband. No one seems to tell the truth unless it's convenient, but Audrey seems a bit lost on where the distinction between 'truth' and 'lie' is. The only certainty is her affection for our charismatic charlatan Cary, no matter how much he switches from 'devoted' to 'deceitful'.

I loved this movie the third time around. Everything is so structured, so measured, so overdetermined, so fatalistic, that you can't help but relent. You are not in control of your feelings. Deceit is the language of material poverty. Truth is the language of immaterial romance. Greed is the mediation of these opposing desires. Everyone wants what they want.

Allow yourself to imbibe and succumb to the uncontrollable doki-doki of your heart. Audrey is a holy fool: she is willing to give up anything for the highest order of love arbitrated by hegemonic masculine deities with indecipherable motives, by Cary Grant, by incomplete, half-promises, promises in hopes that the grander scheme of things that her fidelity will finally reconcile with her desire for affection.

A gullible, ingénue type of love is the one of the greatest tragedies of the human condition because it is meant to disintegrate, to whittle away from the pangs of violence, manipulation, loss, from the moment you have to make a delineation between 'fantasy' and 'reality'. It's no wonder the climax happens in an empty theatre, a place where performance smuggles either elements into a narrative tapestry of conceit and catharsis.

Audrey and the film try their darndest to make us realise that the separation doesn't matter. To feel, to laugh, to cry, is to dignify oneself from the logical inconsistencies, plot holes, jump cuts, and discontinuous editing.

These emotions are as real as they get.

Follow our Instagram and Letterboxd to get live updates and reviews of the festival screenings contributed by our dedicated team of student film aficionados before they hit the magazine print!

- Trevor Pronoso

CINEMA OF CONTORTION

M. NIGHT SHYAMALAN'S MISUNDERSTOOD NARRATIVES OF SUBVERSION

MADLINE SMITH

Content Warning: Contains Spoilers for The Sixth Sense (1999), Unbreakable (2000), and The Village (2004)

With the release of M. Night Shyamalan's new film *Trap* (2024) this past month, it's almost predictable seeing the general public parse through his latest work with the same unchanging expectations, appraisals and prejudices levied upon him throughout his career.

There are few filmmakers with such a strong divide between public reputation and reputation amongst cinephiles I follow than M. Night Shyamalan. In my little online bubble, Shyamalan is considered one of the greatest filmmakers working today, and a bastion of original cinema in an increasingly derivative Hollywood. In the rest of the world, Shyamalan is the guy who makes movies with twists. While Shyamalan's reputation amongst the general public has improved since the early 2010s, it certainly hasn't gotten back to the hype he once had, and his films continue to be discussed with some sense of irony and distance. I am personally not in the group that thinks of Shyamalan as a genius—and I find that this group can often fall into the traps of uncritical stanning and defensiveness that many online fandoms do—but I think they're right that Shyamalan has been too often dismissed, and is a filmmaker who is worth a serious critical engagement.

What I think makes Shyamalan so fascinating is that he's a filmmaker who is always struggling between the desire to make films with a wide commercial appeal and the desire to challenge his audience. While I'd love to cover his entire career, I only have the space to look at his run from 1999's *The Sixth Sense* through to 2004's *The Village*. Over the course of this run, Shyamalan sought to make thrillers with an unusual sense of melancholia and tragedy, often sacrificing logistics in favour of thematic and emotional meaning. However, his increasing move away from the suspense thriller form led to a greater scrutiny towards his logistics.

What struck me upon revisiting *The Sixth Sense* is that its much-acclaimed plot twist can be just as easily picked apart and scrutinised as the films that follow, if not moreso. For us to

buy the plot twist, we have to accept many potentially implausible things, primarily that Malcolm Crowe (played by Bruce Willis), the film's protagonist, goes an entire year where almost nobody interacts with or speaks to him without noticing. We don't notice because of the film's tricks. For instance, a scene begins on Malcolm and the mother of the child he's working with sitting in silence before the child comes in. On the first time around, we assume a conversation has taken place between scenes, but on the second time around we realise they never had one. But how did Malcolm set the meeting up? Did he just assume the mother was giving him the silent treatment for a whole hour? You can do this for just about any scene in the film, but nobody seems to mind this because the emotional engagement is strong enough for viewers to accept it. I certainly don't care to, either.

It's explained in the film that the dead simply ignore these things because they cannot accept that they're dead - they instead go through their routines in order to maintain that their world makes sense. This sets up the main theme across Shyamalan's career, which is the way we use stories and our faith in order to make sense of an incomprehensible world. Whether or not we buy this as a logical explanation, it holds a lot of weight as an emotional one, and adds a tragic dimension to Malcolm's character. This is more or less the contract that Shyamalan creates for the viewer—he will allow you the emotional and thematic engagement of the plot twist, and you will suspend your disbelief and fill in many of the gaps yourself to maintain that engagement. This was a contract that many accepted at the time.

My pick for Shyamalan's masterpiece is 2000's *Unbreakable*, a film that defied many of the expectations audiences had for him after *The Sixth Sense*. Shyamalan's reputation of being a new master of suspense had already settled in, and many wanted a film that would build on the shock of *The Sixth Sense*. But while many viewers remember *Sixth Sense* for its twist, they often forget how quiet and emotionally held back a lot of that film is. In these films, Shyamalan takes on a deeply melancholic mode, both in the overall tone and in his direction of actors - it feels like his characters are always carrying a deep internal sadness that they can't fully release in their line delivery.

These films are full of long silences and gaps in conversation, points where the characters are clearly unable to find the words they want, points where communication fails them. His characters are always feeling lost, empty and struggling to understand their place in the world. *Unbreakable* amps up this sense of melancholia to the point where there's more focus on it than the 'thriller' elements (up to the film only having one small-scale set piece).

Unbreakable's ending strikes the strongest balance between M. Night's crowd-pleasing and challenging tendencies. The film reveals at the end that the character Elijah Price (Samuel L. Jackson) has been setting up the protagonist as a 'superhero' in order to become his 'supervillain'. In Price's eyes, this role gives him the purpose that he's been desperate to seek throughout his life. *Unbreakable's* ending seals the film as a superhero story, and offers the audience the catharsis of both a shocking twist and the settling of the characters into familiar roles. But, *Unbreakable* is also about the horror of turning oneself into a story. When we assign ourselves stories to the real world, we can obtain a greater sense of purpose, but we entrap ourselves in these stories by believing that our roles are inescapable and determined. The final scene of *Unbreakable* is so painful because it shows a man who sees so little value in his own life that he would simply accept he was determined to become evil.

As with *The Sixth Sense*, we can ask many questions about the logistics of *Unbreakable*, such as how Elijah Price was able to pull off such ambitious feats in his pursuit of becoming a 'supervillain'. In both movies Shyamalan places thematic and emotional meaning above logistics, and he succeeds. Why is it then that the logistics of *Signs* and *The Village* have been picked apart so relentlessly? I would defend the endings of both those films, but I do think there's a key reason for the shift in reception. These endings not only place the thematic and emotional meaning above logistics, they place it *above* the suspense and stakes. I think *Signs* and *The Village* are both anticlimactic endings, and this is the reason why they get picked apart so much more. The audience feels less emotionally satisfied, and as a result they can see through the logistical problems more easily.

While I still defend the climax of *Signs*, I'm

more interested in exploring why *The Village* is anticlimactic in a meaningful way. Both of the twists in *The Village* serve to completely undermine the suspense and thriller elements of the film in favour of thematics. The film begins with a focus on the titular village's monsters, which are revealed halfway through to be village elders in costume. The second and more controversial twist is that the film is not a period piece - the elder villagers have set up an 1800s style village in the present day, and while the children genuinely don't know there's a modern world outside of the village, the elders are essentially roleplaying. The elders are obsessed with reliving a 'safer' past, though it becomes clear in the film that the village is nowhere near as safe as they want it to be. This is of course a continuation of his ongoing theme, this time in service of tackling the 21st century obsession with nostalgia. The film is a response to the post-9/11 zeitgeist, where the world was presented as an increasingly unsafe place to be, allowing for ideals of returning to a 'safe' past to flourish. *The Village* reveals this past as an invention, and that even our fantasy of the past is still built around coercion and violence. But even with these cynical thematics, Shyamalan still writes the elders as tragic characters. Like Elijah Price, they retreat into the safety of narrative to cope with an unpredictable and cruel world. Shyamalan loves stories and believes in their magic to an extent, and this is why he always writes his 'storytellers' with a sense of compassion. But he is also aware of the terrible destruction they can do, and it's this sense of conflict that really drives these films dramatically.

Whether or not you like *The Village* as much as I do, the thematic intent of the twist is more than clear. However, it was a point where the contract with the audience no longer worked. I think Shyamalan tried to branch out from the suspense thriller even further than he did with *Unbreakable* while still using the framework of one. While the film made money, it was also relentlessly criticised by critics and audiences for deviating from the thriller plotline and for its plot holes (some of which are actually explained in-film). I find the reception of *The Village* combined with *Lady In The Water* might have been what hurt his career the most in the long run in that it perhaps prevented him from branching out more. In a 2019 interview with *Rolling Stone*, Shyamalan discussed how he has become increasingly comfortable with being known as a thriller director, comparing it to the expectations readers have for Agatha Christie novels. Perhaps that's why I'm not as compelled by his current run of films. I still really enjoy his newest films, and it's clear that Shyamalan hasn't ditched his sense of tragedy entirely (and he's also perhaps the most ambitious he's ever been formally). But their constant urgency, their need to be capital 'T' Thrillers with capital 'T' Twists, means that the sense of melancholia isn't really felt as strongly. Part of me hopes that he'll be able to tap into it again.

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WHITE HOLLYWOOD, STILL? ASIAN REPRESENTATION IN HOLLYWOOD



KALA TAKEBE BURGESS

Without a doubt, Asian actors have struggled to gain visibility in Hollywood. You may think 'yellow face' ended a long time ago, but contrary to that, we have seen several cases of whitewashing roles in various films. Actors such as Scarlet Johansson and Emma Stone have played Asian roles, taking away from the Asian actors in the industry. How is it that according to a report by USC Annenberg in 2017, 60% of the world's population is Asian, but out of 1,100 popular films, only 6.3% were of Asian descent?

It's not every year, at least not previously, that you see an American Hollywood film with most of the cast being Asian. At least not until the first modern story with an all-Asian cast came out in 2018, *Crazy Rich Asians*, a whole 25 years after *The Joy Luck Club*'s 1993 release, which also featured an all-Asian cast. Now, do I like this film? No. Not really. However, I appreciate it as a film that has contributed positively to the impact of Asian representation on the American film industry.

To my surprise, it is also America's highest-grossing romantic comedy of the last decade. Who knew that representation was the key to the success of the film? Because if *Crazy Rich Asians* was an all-white cast film, I guarantee it wouldn't have had as much success as having an Asian cast. Many viewers were waiting for representation and a breath of fresh faces and roles in Hollywood. The fact that this film was not about martial arts, nerds or a period piece with subtitles that many associate with 'Asian films' is pretty incredible in breaking stereotypes.

After the release of *Crazy Rich Asians*, I believe that the weird barrier of including diversity in Hollywood films is slowly coming down. We are beginning to see more and more representation. Films such as *To All the Boys I've Loved Before* (2018), *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022), and *Minari* (2022) are examples of films seen as groundbreaking and again taking a step in the right direction of representation. The fact that *Everything Everywhere all at once* had 11 Oscar nominations is groundbreaking. Though not a Hollywood film, *Parasite* winning the award for Best Picture at the Oscars, also impacted the film industry. For the longest time, Asian films—which are often so beautifully created, are now currently being taken seriously in the West and gaining attraction, which honestly should have happened 2 decades ago. But nonetheless, a win is a win.

Of course, this success is still only the start. Even though we have made groundbreaking achievements, the representation still needs to be improved. Often, films will just throw in an Asian character for diversity (often East Asian) and call it a day. The industry is still so white-centred. Still, we should be proud of our achievements in recent years and how far we have come from the days of yellow face.

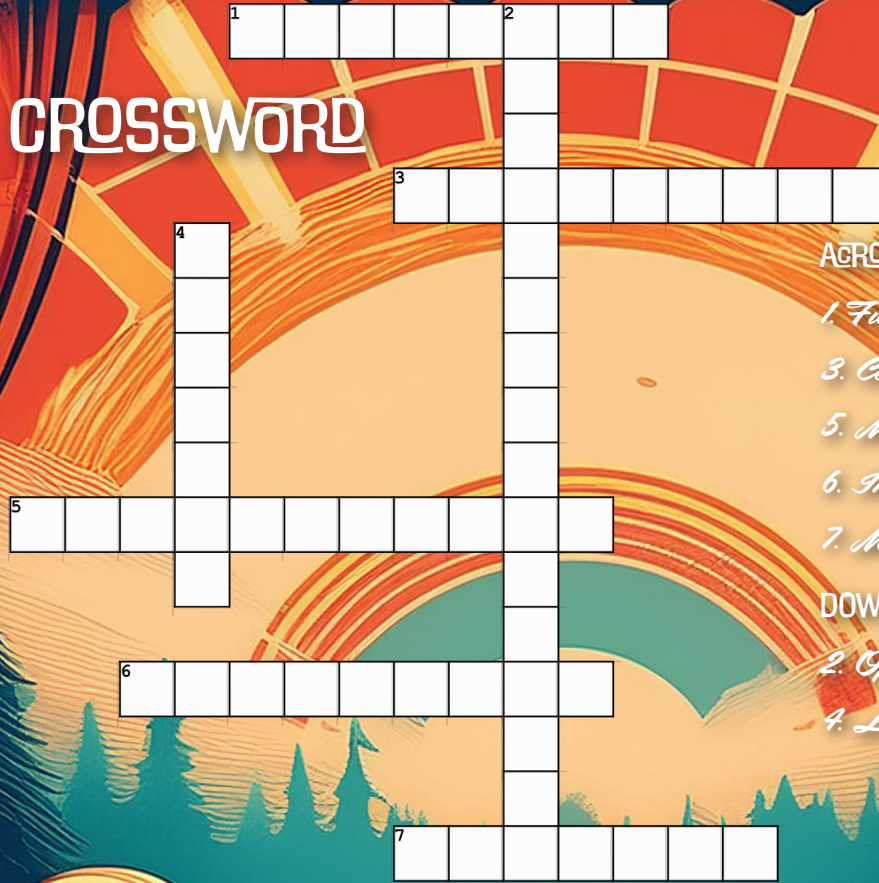
In the near future, I hope Hollywood will become truly diverse as the centre of the film industry and represent everyone.







CROSSWORD



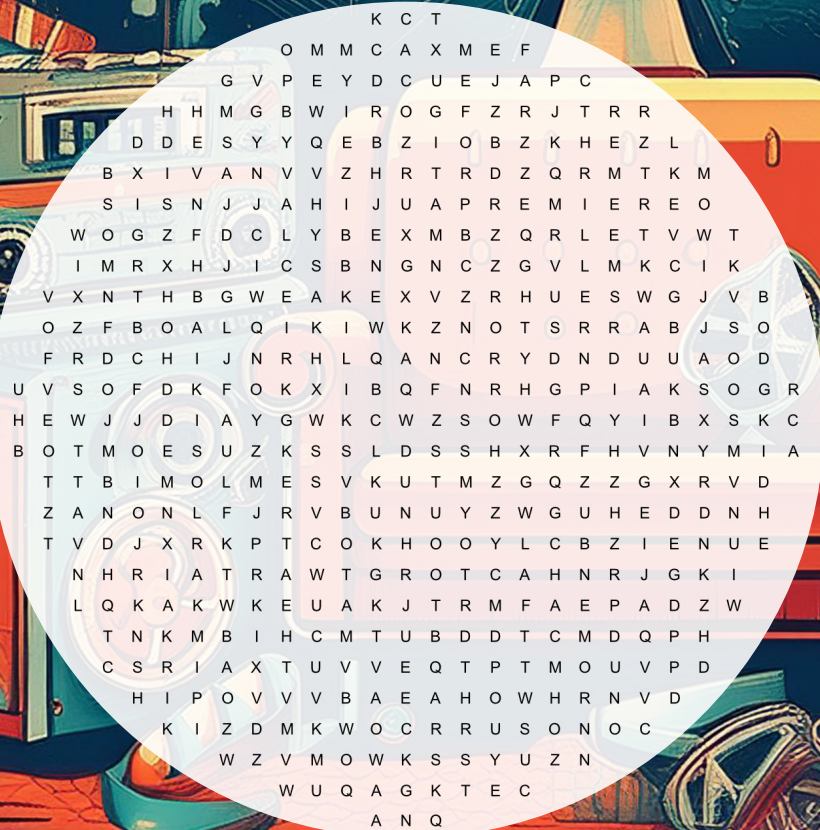
ACROSS

1. Film financier
3. Cartoon, CGI, Pixar
5. Mega hit
6. Indian film industry
7. Magic

DOWN

2. Oppenheimer
4. Love story

WORDSEARCH



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HOROSCOPES



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CLARICE DE TOLEDO

There is a lot going on this week as we head into the peak of Mercury retrograde, at the same time a major transit will take place. Mars and Jupiter will form a conjunction, and right after, they will form a T-square with both Saturn and Venus. This will occur mainly across the mutable signs of Gemini, Pisces, and Virgo. It's a great time for motivation and new opportunities, projects, or relationships. However, you might still feel some obstacles and need to set boundaries while being realistic about certain situations. It's a good opportunity to balance things out and take action towards something new.

ARIES

There could be a lot of focus on your health, daily work, and routine. You might research wellness topics like mental health and spirituality and look into ways to incorporate this knowledge into your projects. You could feel more creative and interested in many things, but your mental energy might be overwhelming. Make sure to rest and manage anxiety.

TAURUS

You might feel inspired to be creative at work projects or even monetize a hobby. You may also be focusing on improving your self-esteem in work, friendships, and dating. Reflect on your boundaries, self-worth, and how often you stand up for yourself. Money and finances could be key this week; consider learning about budgeting to avoid stress over spending.

GEMINI

You might be at a turning point in your career, feeling motivated to seek new opportunities and make changes, though this could be feeling very overwhelming. You could be thinking of moving houses, or making changes to your living situation. There could be some past unresolved tensions that come up that need to be released, you could be feeling nostalgic and excited at the same time.

CANCER

You could be focusing on your studies and side projects around this time, especially anything related to writing, research or esoteric themes like astrology or philosophy. You could be spending more time alone practising a hobby or a project. On another note, it could be that you're contemplating going on a trip and planning ahead your next steps.

LEO

You might be spending more money this week, or you're contemplating investing and saving for the future. There could be a lot of focus in your financial life in general, you could be coming together with people in order to fund a community event, or splitting finances and expenses with a partner or flatmates.

VIRGO

There could be a lot of focus on your career and work this week, with opportunities for job changes, new opportunities, or recognition. You could be taking on new clients and partnering up with people from work. You could be making new discoveries about yourself and new interests, building up confidence and feeling more comfortable putting yourself out there.

LIBRA

You could be feeling more connected to your spiritual beliefs, and explore holistic practices like reiki, yoga, or acupuncture. You could be putting in extra effort in your studies and assignments. Watch out for burnt out signs though, making sure you take time for yourself and other projects like travel or a side hobby.

SCORPIO

You could be focusing on developing greater self confidence, you could be opening up to others more or realising that certain dynamics aren't serving you. You could be looking into ways of implementing more creativity into your work, or starting new projects with friends. On another one, you could feel you're going through a healing period, where you're releasing old patterns and embracing a new optimistic point of view, reconnecting to your inner joy.

SAGITTARIUS

You could be facing communication issues with family or flatmates around this time, there might be some miscommunication that comes up, or irritation surrounding an issue. You could be feeling a strong impulse to keep things organised, or feel the need to move, declutter or clean your room. This transit may also bring clarity when it comes to your career, you could feel pushed to take action and make a decision regarding something at work.

CAPRICORN

You could be more interested in learning more about health, wellness or spirituality. Or you could be focusing a lot on your studies and assignments. You could be busy with writing or speaking projects, like presentations or starting a newsletter or podcast. On the other hand, you could listen to a lot more podcasts and channels of different types of information. You could be researching more into health tips and things like routines, and self-care practices.

AQUARIUS

You could be looking for a way to monetize a creative hobby or be more creative in general. This transit could be the call to action to freelancing or starting your own business. You could be seeking to improve your income with a side hustle or a new part-time job. As you could be spending more money as well. You could be learning how to speak up for yourself more and value your own skills and experience more.

PISCES

This week could be a big deal for you, you might feel an urge to address a situation in your family, or your own living situation. You could be strengthening bonds with your family, and gaining new insights on a situation. If you're in a relationship, you could be contemplating moving in together or meeting each other's family, or it could be that somehow a relationship is mirroring a family dynamic. This could feel like a new chapter, where you feel yourself assuming more responsibilities at home.