

DVD REVIEWS

APOCALYPSE NOW REDUX

Universal, R18+

Don't let the Latin fool you: "Redux" does not mean "Reduced", it means "Redone."

If you aren't familiar with the original APOCALYPSE NOW, let's be brief: Francis Ford Coppola's epic adaptation of Joseph Conrad's novel HEART OF DARKNESS, transferring it from Africa in the 1880s to the VietNam War, won the Palmes D'Or at Cannes in 1979 and instantly established itself among the great American anti-war movies, next to Kubrick's PATHS OF GLORY and DR. STRANGELOVE. Martin Sheen played Willard, sent upriver during the height of the war to assassinate Marlon Brando's Colonel Kurtz, an American General whose "unsound methods" - his complete insanity - require his "termination, with extreme prejudice."

At its heart, the film is an adventure. Willard travels upriver with a PT Boatful of young, unidealistic enlisted men on a highly secret mission, surfing, whoring, and killing along the way. Ultimately, he confronts Kurtz, a charismatic and powerful leader gone mad, and, according to his brief, assassinates him. In the meantime, Willard himself uncovers the madness of war, and of mankind itself.

The \$35 million this film originally cost would equal about \$200 million today, and it shows. Rarely do you see such an epic anymore. The DVD of REDUX enlarges the scope. Coppola, twenty years after his film debuted, decided to reinstate an extra 49 minutes of previously unseen footage, along with an entirely new sound mix, to create APOCALYPSE NOW REDUX.

Coppola wants you to take this new version as the "perfect" one. It makes a great film more complex while not necessarily making it better. At well over three hours, REDUX is for purists: for example, the deleted "French Plantation Scene" is half an hour of fascinating discussion on the origins of the Franco-Viet war, but doesn't move the action forward an inch. In

contrast, extra footage of Brando as Kurtz does wonders, making his character more sane, or at least more ideologically sound, and increases the strength of the film's anti-war bite.

The transfer is glorious, in 2:1 ratio, and you should turn up the incredible sound as loud as you can take it. The extras are all right but should have been better: an interview doco with the members of the PT Boat, including the then-fifteen year-old Lawrence Fishburne as "Clean"; a cool but way-too-short doco on the REDUX version; and, best, the original, apocalyptic "Kurtz Compound Destruction" footage, with and without commentary by Coppola. It's a HUGE pity the man himself didn't do a commentary for the entire film, which remains, unequivocally, a masterpiece.

MOVIE: 9/10

EXTRAS: 6/10

ALTERED STATES

Warner Brothers, M15+

Ken Russell's 1982 mind-f**k of a science-horror film is worth checking out on DVD. It's a great story - a scientist (William Hurt), experimenting with isolation tanks and South American hallucinogenic mushrooms in the 1970s, starts noticing his intense hallucinations giving way to actual genetic restructuring of his body, with disturbingly freaky results.

Hurt makes his feature film debut with huge confidence and charisma. His Dr. Jessup is wildly intelligent and slightly unhinged, speaking - with great clarity - at a mile a minute, growing ever more excited (as we are) by the horrific bodily changes he's putting himself through. It's the sort of role Christopher Walken would make spookier; Hurt makes you care. He's well supported by Bob Balaban, Blair Brown and particularly Charles Haid (Renko on *Hill Street Blues*).

The hallucination scenes are spooky and imaginative, and while some of the visual effects

have dated, the scenes of Jessup's body mutating (made before morphing technology) are realistic and very disturbing. Ultimately, it's a "mad scientist" movie, a modern *Frankenstein* where the doctor and creature are one and the same; if you watch it late at night, alone in the dark, it should still give you the creeps.

Besides trailers, the only features are pages of text.

MOVIE: 8/10

EXTRAS: 2/10

ARLINGTON ROAD

Magna Pacific, M

For a thriller that's essentially about the Okalahoma City bombing, *Arlington Road* (1999) is disappointingly tame. By never mentioning the Okalahoma bombing itself, and by creating a villain much less believable - and scary - than real-life Timothy McVeigh, the script ultimately shies away from the very issues it wants to confront.

Jeff Bridges plays a university professor whose signature class is on American Domestic Terrorism. He's a man in pain, mourning his wife, an FBI agent who died in a botched raid on a suspected anti-government extremist. Gradually, he begins to suspect his neighbour (Tim Robbins) of being such a terrorist...

It's got a terrific opening, a surprising ending, and excellent performances. But it's predictable and unbelievable, and refuses to delve deeply into the dark heart of its subject matter. One wonders why two such politically aware and classy actors agreed to this somewhat exploitative film.

Extras include some interesting on-set footage.

MOVIE: 6/10

EXTRAS: 3/10

BENEATH CLOUDS

Magna Pacific, Rated M15+.

Ivan Sen's debut feature tells the slight tale of two young people heading to Sydney. Lena (Dannielle Hall) is a light-skinned Irish / Aboriginal girl who's run away from home to look for her white father. Vaughn (Damian Pitt) is an Aboriginal boy who's escaped from a low-security prison to visit his sick mother. They meet on the road and travel together, sometimes walking, sometimes getting lifts from strangers or friends.

The trouble is that this is pretty much the whole film. There are many beautiful shots of the Australian landscape (and clouds in particular) but very little substance to the story. Hall and Pitt make attractive leads but they're simply not experienced enough to carry the weight of an entire feature film on their shoulders, especially with very little dialogue. The film is mostly made up of meaningful looks, which on these actors' faces aren't that meaningful.

Every policeman in the film is portrayed, simplistically, as spitefully racist. There is no real ending, and, ironically for a road movie, no real journey. The film certainly has a few things to say about the continuation of racism in modern Australia, but ultimately it's a case of style over substance. The cinematographer (Allan Collins) is the real star here.

Trailers are the only feature.

MOVIE: 5/10

SPECIAL FEATURES: 1/10

BLURRED

Magna Pacific, M15+

In the tradition of *Animal House* and *American Pie*... this film is not.

Supposedly a "teen comedy" set during schoolies week, *Blurred* is actually a moralizing, preachy mess. Don't believe the promotional

material, which would have you think it was going to be wild or at least a bit risqué. This film is tame. No-one has sex, and anyone who drinks or takes drugs is ultimately portrayed as a loser. The director actually makes sure to show a big close-up of a sign saying "Party Safely" towards the end, and climaxes with the two most annoying, non-drinking, sickly-sweet characters deciding they want to "be friends." Cue third-rate Aussie pop song...

The ensemble cast is dreadful, with the notable exceptions of Travis Cotton and Mark Priestley, who bring real energy and life to their roles as a couple of horny drongos. The editing is choppy, the script banal, the music insipid.

Australia is far more socially progressive than the US, so why is our attempt at a teen comedy actually an anti-drugs and alcohol advert in disguise?

Extras include bad deleted scenes and annoying out-takes, but also a reasonable short film called *Mate* by director Evan Clarry and amusing on-set footage by Cotton and Priestley.

MOVIE: 3/10

FEATURES: 5/10

CALLAN

Umbrella Entertainment, M15+

Dirty Harry meets London and kills it.

One of the great things about the DVD revolution is the spawning of companies like Umbrella Entertainment, who are releasing fascinating fare for those of us who would never have gotten to see it otherwise (e.g. *Insomnia*.)

Callan is a true rarity: the barely-seen movie-length remake of the pilot episode of a gritty, practically forgotten British television series about a retired Secret Service hitman wooed back into the assassination game.

Edward Woodward (you loved him in *The Equalizer*) plays the eponymous Callan as Clint Eastwood with a conscience: he loves to kill but

is a little nervous about it. No matter, give him a Magnum .45: his blood-lust runs hot before his (literal, kitchen) kettle boils.

Look, it's very dated. The sets are crappy and some of the support cast are jaw-droppingly awful. But Woodward is simply great, and if you dig Michael Caine when he was still a likely lad; if you've ever liked *Madness* (the band); if things like *The Prisoner* and *MI5* turn you on, you'll probably have a great 101 minutes with this. I did. It's good British assassination fun. And you get a Woodward interview on the features too!

MOVIE: 6/10

EXTRAS: 5/10

GARAGE DAYS

Fox, Rated M15+.

Director Alex Proyas knows how to move a camera and loves a digital effect or twelve. But when you get a lingering shot of washing powder cascading out of its box *from the point of view of the washing machine* you suspect he has concerns about his basic material...

The concept - life in an untalented, undiscovered, young Newtown band - oozes potential. It looks great, the music's great, but the script is riddled with clichés, unfunny gags and, worst of all, ludicrous plotting. The band members can't raise \$240 each to put on a gig that could make their careers, yet they have mobile phones, unlimited beer, and very cool clothes and apartments (not to mention jobs)...

The cast is uneven. Maya Stange as the focus of an unconvincing love triangle rises above the material, and Chris Sadrinna, Russell Dykstra and Martin Csokas get the comic style down. But Pia Miranda is terribly miscast as a neo-punk bass player and Kick Gurry (say it aloud and it sounds like cat vindaloo), while soulful and charismatic, keeps dropping the energy. Brett Stiller as the disturbed lead guitarist comes off

worst, but that could be because his role as written is simply ridiculous.

No features, generic menu.

MOVIE: 6/10

SPECIAL FEATURES: 1/10

ICE AGE

Twentieth Century Fox, Rated G.

Where are the jokes for anyone over six? Of all the CGI feature films of the past half-dozen years, ICE AGE is most strongly aimed at kiddies and kiddies alone.

The predictable and excruciatingly sentimental tale of a huge, noble Woolly Mammoth accompanying a short, ugly, annoying Sloth (a pairing that's a cliché of the genre and feels like a SHREK rip-off) has too few action scenes and far too much unfunny, ponderous dialogue. What clever jokes there are come almost entirely in the first five minutes, cruelly raising false expectations.

Rather than attempting to resemble traditional animation, ICE AGE looks - I'm sure deliberately - just like a (very high quality) game - so much so you'll be reaching for your controller. This gives the characters less heart and soul than those of SHREK or TOY STORY. The only interesting character is a Sabre-Toothed Tiger (voiced by Denis Leary) who (ulterior motives obvious!) accompanies our heroes. Leary's voice suits the character, much more so than Ray Romano's as the Mammoth - quite monumental miscasting! John Leguizamo goes overboard as the lisping, parasitic Sloth - no match at all for Eddie Murphy's ass in SHREK, but essentially exactly the same character.

The (few) action scenes are good fun, as is the scene when we watch the Dodo birds cause their own extinction. Masses of features include director commentary, tons of making-of chapters, deleted scenes and a snatch of historical information. The littlies will love it, but it's

a true shame they didn't include some more jokes for anyone else.

MOVIE: 5/10

SPECIAL FEATURES: 8/10

INSOMNIA

Umbrella Entertainment, M15+

Stellan Skarsgard stars as Jonas Enstrom, a cop who can't get no sleep in this brisk, cold Norwegian thriller (remade in 2002 in the US by Christopher Nolan.) Enstrom's been sent to Northern Norway from his native Sweden to help solve the murder of a schoolgirl. While there, he makes a serious error, and then magnifies the problem by trying to cover it up...

Insomnia's all about the hunter, not the hunted, and that's what makes it interesting. We know who the killer is early. The real story is Enstrom's, and the real dilemma is how far he's willing to go once he embarks on a journey of deceit. Then there's that pesky twenty-four hour Norwegian sun keeping him awake...

If you saw the Al Pacino / Robin Williams version you'll find this original an intriguing companion piece; while a lot of the remake is shot-for-shot, you can also see where Hollywood's stepped in (like making the female lead "perky.") If you've seen neither version, try this one, if only because Norway's a little more exotic than Alaska.

A stylish, quirky cop movie.

MOVIE: 7/10

EXTRAS: 2/10

LEUNIG ANIMATED

Madman Entertainment, Rated G.

Every care has been taken to faithfully capture the surreal spirit of Michael Leunig in these fifty minute-long claymations. Like the

cartoons they're based on, some are funny, some are poignant, some are downright depressing, but they're all exquisitely crafted. The puppets and sets are beautiful and colourful, the original music by Hyton Moday is suitably whacky, and the narration, by Sam Neill, is dry and intelligent.

Great care has also gone into this DVD presentation. On one disc are all fifty films, which you can watch in order or randomly (great for parties!) There's also a gallery of the original cartoons, heaps of production notes and biographies, as well as "out-takes" - watch the puppets stuff it up! The second disc contains a fifty-five minute documentary which offers a pretty good glimpse into the Leunig mind. The menus, the packaging - it's all done with a lot of love.

Essentially, if you like Leunig's cartoons, you'll love this.

CLAYMATIONS: 8/10

SPECIAL FEATURES: 8/10

LIES

Newvision, R18+

Lies indeed. This amazingly boring film picked up some prizes at some of the festivals, and some kudos in some of the more pretentious media. Don't let it fool you. Stay away.

Lies is, without a doubt, the most explicit non-porno sex film I have ever seen; it is also the most boring and unerotic. Telling a boring story of two boring people having supposedly saucy sex in boring hotel rooms in a boring city, and telling it by extremely long boring scenes of long boring sex, is my idea of a really boring time. There is nothing here to turn you on; indeed, there is nothing here.

Perhaps it is "brave" that this very explicit film was made in conservative South Korea. It doesn't matter. Seven bucks is seven bucks, and I'd spend mine renting something else.

The "extras" include a hilarious "Director's Statement" trying to convince you that he's made a piece of art, not trash.

MOVIE: 2/10
EXTRAS: 2/10

MARK LEWIS DOUBLE FEATURE:

CANE TOADS: AN UNNATURAL HISTORY and
THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE CHICKEN

Umbrella Entertainment, PG

You simply can't go wrong with this hysterical double feature from documentarian Mark Lewis. His use of animals to bring out the wacky wonders of the human race is always inspired, and these films are two of his best.

Cane Toads (1987) was his first and finest achievement, the cornerstone of his career, and it remains one of the funniest documentaries of all time. We learn of the introduction of Cane Toads to Queensland in the early twentieth century as a failed controller of the cane grub, their breeding patterns, their poisonous self-defenses, and of the humans who love them, hate them, keep them as pets, run them over deliberately, and of those who boil them down and drink them as a hallucinogen.

History of the Chicken (2000) was made in the United States and introduces us to various breeders and lovers of the noble fowl. It also recalls great chickens of history, including Mike, who lived for eighteen months after his head was cut off!

Both films are riotously funny. The cinematography is gorgeous and Lewis gets a lot of mileage from horror music and dramatic recreations of actual events. Ultimately, though, it is the amazing assortment of human subjects Lewis has assembled that are so compelling.

A director's commentary for *Chicken* gives a good insight into his methods.

Very highly recommended.

MOVIE:

CANE TOADS: AN UNNATURAL HISTORY 10/10
A NATURAL HISTORY OF THE CHICKEN 8/10

FEATURES: 6/10

THE MUSKETEER

Magna Pacific, Rated M.

The ludicrous idea behind this unnecessary adaptation of THE THREE MUSKETEERS is to combine the talents of fight and stunt choreographer Xin-Xin Xiong (CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON) with the swashbuckling genre. The resulting fight sequences are laughably unauthentic, as eighteenth-century musketeers combine long rapiers with martial arts! Rather than invigorate traditional swordplay, this phoniness makes the fights silly and dull.

The talentless Mena Suvari looks and sounds like she should be at the mall, while the newcomer and soon-to-be has-been Justin Chambers shamelessly copies the inflections of Cary Elwes in THE PRINCESS BRIDE. Stephen Rea, Tim Roth and Catherine Deneuve, all in small parts, look extremely embarrassed. Like the fights, the style is all over the place, with American, English and French accents all struggling with dialogue that is half faux-classical and half modern Californian.

The production design is impressive, and expensive-looking, which only makes you wonder who in their right mind put up the dosh for this travesty in the first place.

Features include a lame documentary and worse interviews.

MOVIE: 3/10
SPECIAL FEATURES: 3/10

ONE HOUR PHOTO

Fox, Rated M15+.

Mark Romanek's stylised character study and mood piece is visually interesting and extremely well acted; pity it's so predictable.

Romanek has stated that he wanted to make a "lonely man" film, in the spirit of *Taxi Driver*, and in that he has succeeded. Robin Williams' Sy Parrish is a very lonely man. Middle-aged, unmarried and seemingly devoid of any relationships at all, Sy lives for his work - developing other people's photos at a huge suburban shopping complex called SavMart. In particular, Sy lives for developing the photos of one particular family, the three-member Yorkins - mum, dad, and young Dylan.

The Yorkins, as perceived through their photos, have everything: the large, modern house, the dog and the yard, but mostly, they've got the smiles. Their photographs are soaked in self-satisfaction.

Sy doesn't smile - except when in the company of the Yorkins or their photos. He's desperate for the kind of happiness the Yorkins seem to have in spades, and, as the film opens, he's beginning to crack.

Williams can't seem to play a character without making him sympathetic, and I suspect that's why he was cast; the real villain here is not Sy, but the soulless, generic, humdrum, banal SavMart. Suburbia, consumerism, and the mall have conspired to render Sy's life meaningless and sad; his growing misbehaviour seems almost reasonable for someone who's a little off-kilter to begin with.

Romanek makes his mall as bland as possible, filled with florescent lighting, no windows, and lots of *white*. He also deploys a low, florescent hum; the result is claustrophobic, and a little creepy. Mostly, though, you just feel sad: sad for Sy, sad for the family, and ultimately sad for everyone eking out a mundane suburban existence.

It's a good film, and well made, and has something honest to say; just don't go hoping for thrills and chills, but something else: a grim, quiet, modern cautionary tale.

SPECIAL FEATURES: 0/10

PORN STAR: THE LEGEND OF RON JEREMY

Stomp Visual, Rated R.

Hugely entertaining portrait of Ron Jeremy, the undisputed King of male porn actors. Short, fat and supremely hairy, Jeremy is also a terrific comedic actor and a very witty interview subject. We see a lot of Jeremy's work, from when he was younger and slimmer, and it's like watching a young Dustin Hoffman with a nine inch tool.

Jeremy comes across as a likeable little boy, still trying eagerly to make it in mainstream movies even though he's a multi-millionaire and the undisputed master of his profession. In a way he's extremely sweet: an innocent possessed of a quick wit and a long shlong who still has stars in his eyes.

Although the film completely glosses over the nastier elements of the porn industry, it succeeds superbly as light, and very funny, entertainment, and has a lot to say about the cult of celebrity in America.

Unfortunately there are no special features of merit.

MOVIE: 8/10

SPECIAL FEATURES: 1/10

RABBIT PROOF FENCE

Magna Pacific, Rated PG.

Phillip Noyce's stylish tale of the Stolen Generations has been given first-class DVD treatment from Magna Pacific.

The simple story of three girls who escape the Moore River Settlement and, over nine weeks, follow the (world's longest) fence back to their mothers and homeland is told largely through Christopher Doyle's awesome cinematography and Peter Gabriel's haunting, timeless score.

What's great about this release is the absorbing documentary, FOLLOWING THE RABBIT PROOF FENCE, which documents the search for three Aboriginal girls to play the leads. We observe the whole process, from Noyce travelling all over the country by light aircraft to various Aboriginal communities, through the girls' selection, the (intense) challenges of teaching them to act, and ultimately their work on set. I'd actually recommend watching the doco first to fully appreciate the challenges, and riches, of the film. Afterwards, check out the unusually substantial and informative interviews with all the major creatives, including Gabriel.

MOVIE: 8/10

SPECIAL FEATURES: 9/10

RESERVOIR DOGS

Magna Pacific, R18+, 2 Disc Set

1991. Me and a mate. It was the title that got us in. We'd never heard of this guy Tarantino before and the only actor in it we really knew was Harvey Keitel. But as we left a screening of *Reservoir Dogs*, we instantly agreed that it was one of the best damn movies we'd ever seen.

Spawning a hundred imitations, *Dogs* is the granddaddy of the post-modern pop-culture-referencing self-conscious cool criminal flick. If you haven't seen it, you must; if you have, get this DVD anyway, especially for the extras.

Six guys pull a diamond heist. Two get killed. The remaining four gather at the rendezvous. Suspicious brew: who tipped the cops? Who's the rat? Everyone's armed. Who's gonna die?

The suits, the music, the dialogue, the guns, and the cast... Keitel, Tim Roth (a career-making performance), Buscemi, Chris Penn, old-school gangsters Ed Bunker and Lawrence Tierney, and, perhaps, most memorably, Michael Madsen and *that* scene...

If you haven't seen it since the cinema release, the twists and turns of the plot will surprise you all over again, the time-fractured

narrative paving the way for the even more serpentine *Pulp Fiction*. It's bloody violent and highly profane, and huge amounts of fun. You may want to buy it for a yearly dose.

Now for the extras: awesome. No independent, low-budget film has yet had such a lavish DVD release. There are deleted and alternate scenes - including *that* scene from a much more gruesome angle - along with scene commentaries by noted film critics, short features on location scouting, action figures and the independent scene in 1992, radio out-takes with Steven Wright, masses of textual information on film noir, but best of all, supremely enjoyable long-form interviews with most of the cast, production team, and Tarentino himself, who is a true freak. All that's missing is a Tarentino full commentary.

A classic given a classic treatment.

MOVIE: 10/10

EXTRAS: 9/10

THE SALTON SEA

Warner Brothers, R18+

An American cross between *Trainspotting*, *Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* and *Red Rock West*, this straight-to-video drug noir wears its influences too loudly on its sleeve. Val Kilmer plays a methamphetamine user who's selling out dealers to a couple of cops (Doug Hutchison and Anthony LaPaglia). Warned to get lost for his own safety, he tries for one big score, from a noseless hillbilly dealer known as Pooh-Bear (Vincent D'Onofrio.) But no-one's motives are what they seem, and the stage is set for double-crossings aplenty..

D'Onofrio is truly entertaining as the fat freak with a plastic shnoz, Kilmer makes interesting choices as the drug-addled anti-hero, and Peter Sarsgaard, Luis Guzman, Meat Loaf and Adam Goldberg all turn up in quirky little low-life roles. But the whole thing is too derivative and laboured; trying to be quirky yet sombre, hip

yet retro, it ends up being kinda good, yet pretty bad.

Meagre features include interviews revealing how overly serious everyone took the whole thing.

MOVIE: 5/10

EXTRAS: 3/10

SWIMFAN

Icon Home Entertainment, M15+

Since it's not a *credited* remake of *Fatal Attraction*, *swimfan* must be called a rip-off, but at least it's acknowledged. The first thing Aussie director John Polson says on the extra featurette, *Girlfriend from Hell*, is that they wanted to make... *Fatal Attraction* in high school. And they did. Evil Temptress Erika Christensen claims she based her performance on Glenn Close's. There's even a deleted scene that's a direct homage to the boiled bunny sequence...

You know what you're gonna get, and you get it. Luckily, *swimfan* is quite well made along the way. Polson shoots in richly deep, crisply stylized blues; the first half is briskly and excitingly plotted, and the acting is surprisingly intricate and quirky. Unfortunately the second half throws all plausibility out the window, and loses our interest. Polson admits on the commentary that they re-structured the whole third act after shooting was finished, and it shows. The ending is ludicrous, boring, and a cop-out.

That said, it's a stylish affair, and if you want a teen thriller, this is probably one of the better ones.

It's a great pity Polson is joined for the commentary by stars Christensen and Jesse Bradford, who shamelessly and annoyingly hog the mike.

MOVIE: 6/10

FEATURES: 6/10

SWINGERS and MADE

Magna Pacific, both MA 15+

Jon Favreau is a terrific writer, and his two produced screenplays, *Swingers* and *Made*, are hugely entertaining and very funny.

Swingers (1996), directed by Doug Liman, is a simple, almost plotless tale of out-of-work actors trying to pick up girls in Los Angeles. What's great is the hilarious, snappy dialogue and the superb performances from Favreau and Vince Vaughn, who steals the movie as an egomaniacal best buddy with a hidden, but honest, heart of gold. This was Vaughn's breakthrough role and he's unforgettable, playing an overbearing loudmouth with his buddy's best interests at heart. The LA setting of actual bars and nightclubs is a fascinating and realistic portrait of nightlife in that strange city.

Made (2001) - which Favreau also directed - puts Vaughn in the centre of the action. He and Favreau play extremely small-time hustlers who are given a break by their mob boss (Peter Falk) and sent on an apparently simple errand to New York. Favreau's Bobby tries to do the right thing, but Vaughn's Ricky, an uncool, overbearing loudmouth (again!), threatens, with his ineptitude, to destroy their mission at every turn. It's a very brave performance because Ricky is an exceptionally unlikable character, but Vaughn pulls it off with amazing comic instincts. It's uncomfortable comedy; everything Ricky does makes you cringe and squirm, and some people may find him, and Vaughn's performance, too much. I love it, and am impressed that Vaughn can make such a despicable character even remotely sympathetic.

The films are very similar. *Swingers* is funnier and easier to like; *Made* has more edge, and takes more risks with character and genre. Rent them both and watch them in chronological order to enjoy the growing, brilliant rapport between two extremely gifted comic actors.

Unfortunately *Swingers* has no extras beyond a trailer; *Made* has superb extras, including three

good docos and a huge amount of very entertaining out-takes, deleted and alternate scenes.

SWINGERS:
MOVIE: 8/10
EXTRAS: 1/10

MADE:
MOVIE: 7/10
EXTRAS: 8/10

THE TRANSPORTER

20th Century Fox, M15+

How did this ever get made? *The Transporter* is truly wretched. An eighties-style actioner, it's one of those movies where bad guys sit around in huge mansions wearing suits and playing cards all day, and everyone knows martial arts.

Jason Statham (*Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* and *Snatch*) puts on a truly dire American accent (for no logical reason) as Frank, a "transporter" who, ridiculously, lives in a cliff-top chateau in the South of France, and transports illegal goods, no questions asked. When he is hired to transport a young woman (Shu Qi) he finds himself caught up in the type of trouble that has men in suits firing bazookas at his house...

The music is abominable, the martial arts scenes are uninspired, the plot is ludicrous. Worse still, there's very little action until the end! Statham smirks like a bad Bruce Willis parody, and Shu Qi is simply appalling. The acting in *Final Fantasy* was better.

Movies simply don't get much worse than this. It's so bad it'll make you angry. Thankfully there are no special features.

MOVIE: 1/10
FEATURES: 0/10

WILLY WONKA AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY

Warner Brothers Family Entertainment

WILLY WONKA AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY (1971) is insane. Try the plot:

Young dirt-poor Charlie wins a 'magic ticket' and infiltrates a bizarre chocolate factory run by a demented bug-eyed freak and

his crew of moralising orange dwarfs who methodically kill four greedy children.

The new "Warner Bros. Family Entertainment" DVD release is also insane: a superb extras package bracketing a substandard

rendering of this amazing film in 4:3 format. The insult to the film is incredible. Like HARRY POTTER AND THE

PHILOSOPHER'S STONE, this film has been boxed in "for the sake of the children"; do they think the children are so stupid?

WILLY WONKA is one of the most freaked out, "trippy" big budget pictures ever made. Kids get drowned, pecked to death

and shrunk to nothingness as Gene Wilder's brilliant and nutsoid Willy Wonka educates Charlie on how to rise above

television, gum, and greediness to become a millionaire, amidst mind-blowing sets, whacked-out songs and, yes, orange dwarfs.

The film itself is unbelievably entertaining and a true, brilliant oddity of the early seventies. The DVD extras are great, including a

contemporary doco including footage of legendary Roald Dahl, the author, and a later doco which reviews the entire

production process, including interviews with all the main child actors and an examination of their current lifestyles (they all

became accountants!) They all get together - with Charlie! - for a commentary too. Gene Wilder pops up in both

documentaries and, like the legend he is, lambasts the child actors as being "little brats"!

It's a great, insane movie. See it despite its 4:3 rendering, and watch the extras.

MOVIE: 9/10
EXTRAS: 9 /10
TRANSFER: 6 /10

Y TU MAMA TAMBIEN

Magna Pacific / Dendy, R18+

This excellent Oscar Winner for Best Original Screenplay has been paired with a terrific "making-of" doco for a pristine DVD release. Both a remarkably intimate examination of friendship and a highly erotic road movie, *Y Tu Mama Tambien* is nothing less than a complete original.

Julio (the unbelievably cool Gael Garcia Bernal) and Tenoch (Diego Luna) are seventeen-year-old best mates living life to its utmost in Mexico City. Deciding they need a road trip to the beach, they manage to take along twenty-eight year old Luisa (Maribel Verdu), Tenoch's cousin's wife. Lust, and more, ensues...

Everything you want in a movie about late adolescence is here - the joints, the beer, the sex, the jealousy, the love, the cars, the secret codes... and the betrayal.

Alfonso Cuaron (currently shooting the third *Harry Potter*) elicits incredibly brave naturalistic performances from everyone. The settings - from Mexico City, down the coast to an incredible beach - are glorious and hugely exotic. The music rocks. The impassive narration provides all-to-real insights into male friendship. And Verdu is *hot*.

Watch it with a mate and laugh with recognition or watch it with a lover and get down afterwards. Either way it's a winner. Plus the doco is extremely funny. A perfect evening's rental.

MOVIE: 8/10
EXTRAS: 8/10