

Directed by: Nicolas Winding Refn

Starring: Ryan Gosling, Carey Mulligan and Bryan Cranston



This is not an action movie. Quite a few patrons of the local multiplex left midway through our screening of *Drive*, the latest from Danish filmmaker Nicolas Winding Refn (*Bronson*, *Valhalla Rising*). From the title they were probably expecting violence and car chases along the lines of *The Fast & the Furious*. While *Drive* contains ample servings of both, it's not exactly in Vin Diesel's style.

“disappointed viewers likely left due to *Drive*'s slow-paced first half, but they missed out on a riveting denouement”

The film centres around Ryan Gosling's nameless character, a film stunt-driver by day and a getaway wheelman by night. He meets Irene (Carey Mulli-

gan), his new neighbour, and the two begin an intimate if withdrawn friendship, with our protagonist helping Irene look after her young son Benicio. Things quickly turn ugly though when Irene's husband Standard (yes, that's his name) returns from incarceration. Owing protection money from prison, Standard enlists our driver's help, and soon they are embroiled in a robbery plot with the local crime mob.

The disappointed viewers likely left due to *Drive*'s slow-paced first half, but they missed out on a riveting denouement. Its deliberate pacing mounts

tensely and reflects the methodical character of the driver who is suitably (and brilliantly) downplayed by Gosling. His



DRIVE

and Mulligan's scenes are often ponderous, with lingering stares and one-word exchanges expressing their unspoken chemistry. But following the script's literally shocking turn, the built-up tension erupts and Refn's direction emerges as the star of the show. Evoking Michael Mann's *Heat*, he captures Los Angeles in a stylish but

grounded fashion which is visually beautiful to watch. In *Drive*'s relatively few (for a film so named) vehicular sequences, he delivers the vivid intensity of actually being in a car chase that so many action movies fail to convey. Similarly, the film's violence is given a visceral reality which, unlike many Hollywood flicks, horrifies rather than glori-

fies. The sound is almost an extra actor; loudly allowing every gunshot, stab or engine roar to impact hellishly, while the electro-pop soundtrack lends surprisingly poignant emotion to the pivotal scenes.

Drive may not be what you were expecting, but it is one of the best pieces of crime cinema in recent years. Whatever you do, don't leave until the end.

words: **Sam Caveen**

Coming up in film next week:

Action thriller *Abduction* starring Taylor Lautner.

Melancholia, an apocalyptic drama directed by Lars von Trier, starring Kirsten Dunst.

Thrilling drama *The Debt* starring Helen Mirren.

Follow @Ls2_arts.
Email: arts@leedsstudent.org.
Writer's meetings are Thursdays 5pm outside LS office.

Directed by: Gavin O'Connor
Starring: Tom Hardy, Nick Nolte.



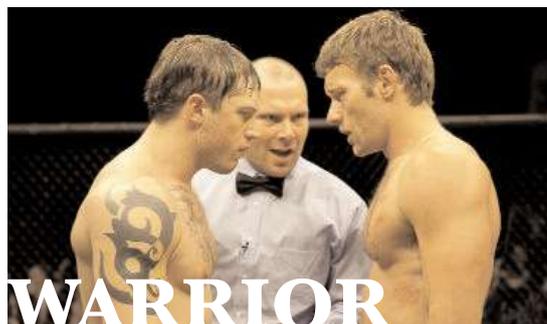
The fighting-drama genre has showcased some powerful performances in recent years, for instance *The Wrestler* and *The Fighter*. Directed by Gavin O'Connor, *Warrior* continues in this vein as two brothers, Brendan Conlon (Joel Edgerton) and Tommy Riordan (Tom Hardy) enter a mixed martial arts tournament. Conlon needs the money to keep his family afloat whilst Riordan appears to be searching for a purpose after leaving the Marine Corps. Nick Nolte plays the estranged father, Paddy, trying desperately to resolve the differences between the two brothers.

It's a film about fighting that never loses focus of the emotional drama its stars are going through. Fights before the tournament are scarce and showcase the brother's different styles, Riordan, a ruthless powerhouse and Conlon, a more technical fighter. Come tournament time the action heats up with hard hits, quick cuts and a colourful commentary to give a

realistic feel. Between fights we learn more about the relationship between the two brothers and their father who have all become distant. Riordan borders on anti-hero until we learn why he is fighting and it becomes apparent the brothers can only resolve their differences in the ring.

Nolte and Hardy are both great, particularly when they're together and there are some deep, emotional scenes between the two. Hardy is mostly soft-spoken; his character speaks little of his past or feelings, meaning when we do hear from him we take note. However Edgerton steals the show as the underdog family man in the fighting world. He struggles through his fights, opposed to Riordan who regularly leaves his opponent unconscious in the opening round, meaning each victory is an emotional triumph for him as well as us. It's surprising that, in the end, you want neither brother to lose, making the climactic bout an emotional ride that will have you on the edge of your seat and the verge of tears.

words: **James Story**



WARRIOR

Directed by: Glenn Ficarra, John Requa

Starring: Steve Carell, Ryan Gosling, Julianne Moore



Aptly titled, this is a film to be missed. Stealing parts from every rom-com around, *Crazy, Stupid, Love* is a lumbering Frankenstein's Monster of a comedy, and although it boasts a few laughs, there are absolutely no surprises.

Steve Carell is Cal, a forty-something businessman who seems to have it all: a nice house, two lovely kids and marriage to his childhood sweetheart. But when his wife (Julianne Moore) demands a divorce, Cal is thrown into the shark pit that is dating in the twenty-first century. Luckily, handsome womaniser Jacob (Ryan Gosling) is on hand to administer the fairy-godmother treatment, and Cal is soon a Prada-clad master of seduction. Despite having 'rediscovered his manhood' through a series of one-night stands (a great message by anyone's standards), Cal finds that he cannot forget his first love. Meanwhile his son adores the babysitter, and Hannah, played by Emma Stone, lusts after Gosling's character.

Clearly the casting director did well and if it's stars you want, look no further; the expression 'type-cast' however definitely springs to mind. Steve Carrel again

fails to stretch himself, playing a kooky office-type experiencing a mid-life crisis (remember *The Office*, *Date Night*). Oh, and he's not very good with the ladies (*40 Year Old Virgin*). Brave, Steve, brave.

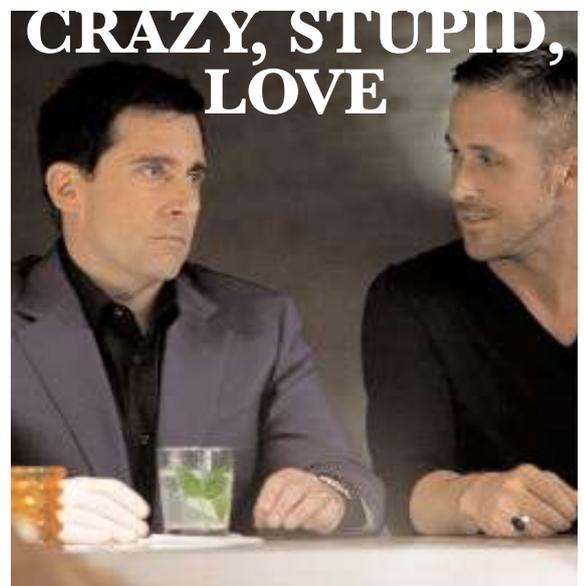
However, the movie's biggest flaw is that it tries to be too many things and for too many people. The babysitter storyline feels positively Nickelodeon in a hotbed of adultery, general promiscuity, and alcoholism. For a film about a family, it is definitely not a family-film.

Cheap jokes and stock

comedy scenarios generate the humour. The film's best moment? As the rain pours down and the sad music plays, Carell says what we're all thinking: 'What a cliché.'

However, the film does relax into itself in the last third and pulls all its strands together for a plausible ending, exceeding my now very low expectations. A date-film of the worst kind: Clichéd, Saccharine, Love.

words: **Amy Duggan**



CRAZY, STUPID, LOVE

REVIEW: Shame



Directed by: **Steve McQueen**
Starring: **Michael Fassbender, Carey Mulligan**

Riotous applause filled the Town Hall last Friday as the enraptured audience of *Shame* celebrated not only one of the most powerful films of the year, but the end of the Leeds International Film Festival. Steve McQueen's much-anticipated second feature rounded off what has been an exciting fortnight of films, stunning audiences with a harrowing portrayal of two emotionally damaged siblings.

Michael Fassbender will doubtless be gracing the stage at this year's Oscars following his transcendent turn as Brandon, a personable New York businessman who privately struggles with sex addiction. His consuming quest for sexual gratification - be it predatorily stalking the bars of New York, trawling the internet for pornography, or eliciting sex-workers - not only fills him with an ever deepening sense of ignominy, but also prevents him from having meaningful relationships. When his unstable younger sister Sissy (the diaphanous Carey Mulligan) turns up on his

doorstep, stirring memories of a painful shared childhood and threatening to unearth his secrets, Brandon's destructive impulses begin to spiral out of control.

The film is highly visceral, words more or less redundant in McQueen's nightmarish vision of an underclass enslaved by lust. The haunting score overshadows the minimal dialogue, and what is actually voiced is conveyed with far more power through evocative facial close-ups. In one of the most memorable scenes Sissy sings 'New York, New York' to her brother at a downtown bar. When Fassbender's radioactive stare and Mulligan's doe-eyes meet across the room, there is an emotional maelstrom as both characters ponder broken dreams and their unspoken past. All that the audience knows for sure is from one cryptic voicemail from Sissy in her darkest hour: "We're not bad people, we just came from a bad place."

Although the audience are invited between the sheets with Brandon, he remains very much an enigma. The camera often positions the viewer as a mere voyeur rather than an intimate confidant - watching a busi-



photo: All Movie Photos

ness meeting through a glass wall or a dinner date through the window of a restaurant. McQueen enjoys unsettling the viewer, and in the final moments of the film inflicts upon the audience a painful questioning of their connection with the protagonist. As Brandon eyes up a married woman we are left not only with a

sense of cycles repeating themselves, extinguishing all hope of redemption, but a fear that the character is not emotionally trapped but morally vacuous.

Bordering on the pornographic in its relentless portrayal of sexual glutony, this is not a film to take your parents to. However, McQueen's

keen cinematographic eye tempers the bold with the beautiful, resulting in a blisteringly intense and deeply unsettling journey into the darkest parts of human nature.

words: Amy Duggan

Thought Bubble Convention 2011



photo: James Story

Leeds' 5th annual comic festival takes the Royal Armouries and Saviles Halls by storm.

Growing from a small collection of stalls in the Leeds Town Hall to occupying two full convention halls, Leeds' fifth annual Thought Bubble

comic festival was celebrated last week, bringing with it a host of comic traders, independent creators and professionals.

The two-day comic book convention was hosted in the Royal Armouries and Saviles Halls at the weekend, but a whole host of events were held throughout the week. The festival,

working with the Leeds International Film Festival, screened a variety of films: from the award-winning *Persepolis* to revealing documentaries behind two of comic's greatest minds, Grant Morrison (*Talking with Gods*) and Warren Ellis (*Captured Ghosts*). A mid-convention party held at FAB Cafe brought cos-

tumes, games and more films for festival goers before the weekend convention.

The convention itself hosted some of the largest names in comics, the likes of Gail Simone (*Batgirl*), Jeff Lemire (*Animal Man*), Dave Gibbons (*Watchmen*) and Charlie Adlard (*The Walking Dead*) were all in attendance. Tim Sale, famous for his work on Batman titles *The Long Halloween* and *Dark Victory*, along with much of the artwork for the television show *Heroes*, was the guest of honour and took part in a panel discussion on his work between signings and giving personal sketches to fans. Panels were held throughout the weekend, including a spotlight on the works of Alan Moore and a discussion of the impact of technology in the comics industry.

However the convention was not only a showcase for some of comic's brightest stars. Leeds' own *Travelling Man* and *OK Comics* stores were also there offering exclusive convention discounts and offers. Thought Bubble is also a chance for independent creators, writers and artists to show off their skills, learn more about the industry and try to make their first steps breaking into it. A variety of panels were aimed at helping young creators in many ways, including scriptwriting, self-publishing, marketing and funding. There were also

portfolio drop-ins for artists to gain expert knowledge from Marvel Comics editor Steve Wacker, 2000 AD and independent publishers Nobrow.

Amongst the indie comic creators were Leeds University's own Biserka Horne and Richard Worth and Jordan Collyer, selling their self-made comics *FML* and *Ladies & Gentlemen*. "Thought Bubble is the best convention in the country," said Collyer, who praised the opportunities it generates for small press creators, "It gives you the chance to participate in the artwork and the community instead of just being a spectator in it and I think it's great for those who are trying to make their own way."

With hundreds of costumed and crazed fans filling the Saviles Hall, it's easy to say that once again Thought Bubble has gone down a storm with comic lovers from across the country. Giving independent artists the chance to shine and industry professionals a venue to share their wisdom, it's the highlight of the year for those who read and write the graphic medium.

words: James Story

For more information and news about next year's convention visit thoughtbubblefestival.com

Film Review: Martha, Marcy, May, Marlene



Director: Sean Durkin
Starring: Elizabeth Olsen, Sarah Paulson and John Hawkes

Sean Durkin's feature film debut *Martha Marcy May Marlene* may be a mouthful, but the title is perfectly appropriate for the content. Elizabeth Olsen presents us with a character in Martha who we can never quite pin down, and her personality is as confusing as the film's name. We encounter Martha as she escapes from a cult and seeks solace and recovery at her sister (played by a wonderful Sarah Paulson) Lucy's lake house, where she is staying with her new husband. Through a series of flashbacks, spliced into the present day narrative like a series of dreams only half-remembered, Martha's past life as Marcy May in a cult is revealed to us. The cult is led by Patrick, who is played to perfection by John Hawkes, an equally creepy, terrifying and enigmatic leader, with the whole

thing being very reminiscent of the Manson family.

“Martha ultimately seems to be many people and nobody all at once.”

Gradually, we realise that Martha has been so psychologically conditioned and abused by her time with Patrick and the others that she cannot mentally escape their grasp. Outbursts begin to threaten the peace of her sister's new life and Martha's erratic behaviour causes both her sister and the audience to question how mentally sound she is. Perhaps the most interesting part of these outbursts is her regurgitation of the group's political sentiments, which are basically a more aggressive, sheltered notion of self-sustainability. Is Durkin passing comment on modern

society through the cult's ideals? Are the cult's attacks of the rich and privileged ones we can sympathise with in a post-financial crash world? It is hard not to think that, were they de-radicalised, we would find ourselves agreeing with Patrick and his followers.

Most importantly though, the film is a psychological thriller where the action moves along at a quietly gathering pace, inducing a breathless suspense that is at once uncomfortable and exciting. The prospect of Patrick finding her plagues Martha, and we feel the unease in her growing as she unravels. The ending is *Inception*-like in its complete refusal to offer an answer, and is so ambiguous that many viewers feel cheated. It succeeds, however, in continuing to build the film's tension and holds its breath to the very last, leaving the viewer terrified, confused and excited all at once.

Martha ultimately seems to be many people and nobody all at once. We see in her her old self trying to resurface, the false identity the cult presented her with, and the lie she had to tell the outside world as Marlene. We are uncertain which aspect of her will or has won out, and so we cannot ever be sure of Martha's suspicions. This doubt and confusion over the true nature of both Martha and the film is brought on by the subtle finesse with which each actor (even Hugh Dancy, no longer just the plucky Brit) plays their role, letting just the right ounce of emotion shine through whilst keeping the action cool and smooth enough to maintain the emotional suspense. Filmed in a palette of muted greys and greens, *Martha Marcy May Marlene* is visually stunning with a setting as ambiguous as the plot.

words: Joanna Thompson



Martha, Marcy, May, Marlene John Hawkes as Patrick photo: allmoviephoto.com

In Brief: the BAFTAs....



With the BAFTAs quickly approaching, LS2 gives you the lowdown on what to expect...

Best Film

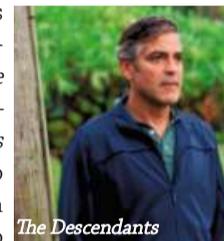
The silent homage to the golden age of Hollywood, *The Artist*, is all set to steal the show this year with twelve nominations, including best leading roles for French actors Jean Dujardin and Bérénice Bejo. The actors' performances arguably pale in comparison to that of Uggie, the Jack Russell Terrier, who has unfortunately been snubbed by BAFTA panellists but may still receive the Golden Collar Award at the Oscars later on this month. The film faces stiff competition from George Clooney's *The Descendants*, civil-rights drama *The Help* and *Drive*, starring Ryan Gosling.



The Artist

Leading Actor

After being knocked back for a part in Alexander Payne's 2004 comedy-drama, *Sideways*, George Clooney's performance in *The Descendants* seems to conform perfectly to the masculine, middle-aged losers that are so prominent in Payne's films. Playing the struggling father, Clooney is raking in the nominations, however, he will face Gary Oldman, starring in the film adaptation of John le Carré's novel and Brad Pitt in *Moneyball*, the biographical sports drama. Michael Fassbender is also up for his cold portrayal of sex addiction in *Shame*.



The Descendants



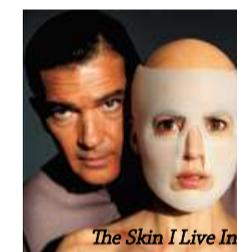
Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy

Outstanding British Film

The category exemplifies the UK's contribution to some of the best films of the year, including the disturbing *We Need to Talk About Kevin* and Steve McQueen's *Shame*, which closed last year's Leeds International Film Festival. With ten other nominations, the spy thriller set amidst the Cold War, *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* is tipped to do well after being completely ignored by the Golden Globes.

Best Foreign Language Film

Over twenty years ago, Pedro Almodóvar launched Antonio Banderas to international superstardom with *Tie Me Up, Tie Me Down*. Last year, the two joined forces again, along with Elena Anaya, to film *The Skin I Live In*, a disturbing revenge thriller with Banderas in the role of a deranged plastic surgeon. Other contenders include the stalwarts of French cinema, Catherine Deneuve and Gerard Depardieu in the naff 70s-style comedy, *Potiche*, and the Iranian film *A Separation*, which picked up the Golden Bear at last year's Berlin Film Festival.



The Skin I Live In

Leading Actress

Two portrayals of female icons dominate the award for Best Leading Actress: Meryl Streep for *The Iron Lady* and Michelle Williams as Marilyn Monroe. A far cry from her Dawson Creek days, Michelle Williams sparkles in Simon Curtis' debut feature film, *My Week with Marilyn*, detailing the troubled star's standoff with Laurence Olivier on the set of the 1957 film *The Prince and the Showgirl*. Streep won her only BAFTA back in 1981 for *The French Lieutenant's Woman*; however, her depiction of stony-faced Thatcher in her elderly years could secure the actress another trophy.



My Week with Marilyn

The BAFTAs are on BBC 1, 9pm Sunday 12th February.

words: Chris Arden photos: allmoviephoto.com

Online this week...

Chronicle, reviewed by James Story
 "Chronicle is surprising in its maturity...it has a lot more to it than you might think"

Young Adult, reviewed by Nicholas Jackson
 "undiluted, sharp, ascerbic wit..."

Carnage, reviewed by Amy Duggan
 "various dark and hostile impulses surface throughout the film"

Transform 12, reviewed by Lily Dessau
 'an intimate show, showing more can be expected from the festival'

Don't Think, reviewed by Fred Mikardo Greaves
 "blurring the perceptions of what a concert film should be about"

Waiting For Godot, reviewed by Matt Hutchinson
 "the overriding thrill of this production comes from the excellent cast"

Race You to Hollywood
 Liam Walsh discusses David Harewood's comment that black actors only find top roles in Hollywood.
LGBT in the Arts
 Fearghas Cleary looks at the role the arts can play in offsetting the impact of homophobia.

Look Out Post Dance Exposé 'Passport to Dance' 15-18th February Riley Smith Hall. Tickets on sale in the union £5.50 advance.
Perpetual Motion 9 - 18 February in the Stanley & Audrey Burton Theatre, tickets from £13.
 Northern Ballet's first mixed programme of short dance pieces.

During the ceremony (BBC1, 9pm) visit www.leedsstudent.org to take part in our live blog and tell us what you think!

Why do we watch the award ceremonies?

In the midst of the award season LS2 writers give us their opinions on ogling the stars, their dresses and why we want to see the faces of the losers.

For proof celebrities are human too...

This year I've been tuning in solely to listen to various celebrities attempt to pronounce the name of the director of *The Artist*, Michel Hazanavicius. Brad Pitt coped disappointingly well at the Baftas, but I still have hope for an embarrassing pronunciation misdemeanor at the Oscars, or at least a wardrobe malfunction. The desire for proof that these god-like celebrities may indeed be human and fallible drives my Award ceremony viewing. Having said that, Meryl Streep handled her on stage shoe-loss last week with suspiciously transcendent grace. Fingers crossed Billy Crystal is able to come up with some witty gems at the Oscars! And that he breaks a statuette...

words: Amy Duggan

For the losers faces?

If I am quite honest, I am not too sure why I watch awards shows. I suppose I genuinely enjoy that moment when the camera pans to the loser pretending to be elated for the victor. Don't get me wrong, the roundup and celebration of the nominees is worth seeing. But once only. And in an age of Twitter, who really needs to sit through 2-3 hours of monotonous coverage? However, I find myself watching time and time again, despite the fact that I am essentially endorsing those with lives far more privileged than what my own will ever be.

words: Ryan Baulk

To show us that what we love really is the best in its class...

I like to think of awards ceremonies as communication between the film industry and its fans. We all love talking about our favourite films and this way we get to know what the big names in the industry think were the best of the year. With so many films of great quality across so many genres, awards and nominations can pick out the shining stars you might have missed amongst the blockbusters. Of course, everyone has opinions when our personal favourites are snubbed (the Academy did see *Drive*, right?) but we all take a great joy when what you loved at the cinema is recognised as the best in its class. Awards ceremonies bring the professionals to your home; they sit down with you and say "This was the best of the year". Agree or disagree, it gets everyone talking about a medium that they love.

words: James Story

Too tedious and long for me!

With so many award ceremonies around these days: The Oscars, BAFTA's, British Soap awards, People's Choice, Teen Choice, the list goes on, can we really be expected to sit through award after award, and speech after speech over and over and still get excited? Although the praise and recognition of various artist's work is something which should be celebrated, surely there is a better way than a two hour long show, preceded by a half hour 'Red Carpet Show' just so you can judge what everyone is wearing. The shows themselves are often tedious and repetitive with all of the winners coming up and thanking a load of people we have never heard of for their contribution to their success. Although there is the occasional 'golden moment' we can always catch them on YouTube the next day!

words: Sarah Harding



To satisfy my inner film buff...

The awards season is just a string of evenings of self-indulgence for those who like to think of themselves as 'film-buffs'. Watch alongside one, and expect being forced into placing bets on each category, whilst listening to a running commentary on the neglect of independent cinema when it comes to the nominations. And don't forget the continuous groans when that film persists to steal all of the limelight - even if it is good enough! I can confirm I do not force my friends into gambling on the BAFTAs, but I cannot deny the satisfaction in keeping up to date with cinema enough to know who and what the different awards are commending. I like to learn about these things, in hope that one day I can make a film that might be considered half as good as those with even one nomination during awards season.

words: Lily Dessau

For the glitz and glamour...

The BAFTAs is a very stereotypically Hollywood fiasco; amidst the glare of the ruby red carpet, the perfectly quaffed bouffant and the fabric laden, jewel encrusted gowns, it becomes almost clichéd. Yet perhaps it is precisely this that urges the public in their thousands to tune in to hear Stephen Fry's witty anecdotes about the film industry and 'how talented' they all are. Now part of a society

that dwells far too much on celebrity culture, whether we like it or not, the supposedly 'real' and glamorous glimmer into their world is all too appealing. We're curious, if anything, to see if the marvellous Meryl Streep gets her deserved BAFTA for 'The Iron Lady', she does by the way and I admittedly found myself clapping alone when her name was announced, as much as we are to see what Carey Mulligan is wearing. Self indulgent of the film industry?

Maybe so. The unfathomable salary most actors receive per Hollywood blockbuster is surely congratulatory enough- why present their success and fame in an even more painfully ostentatious light? But to many its harmless tradition and it does after all paint a pretty picture of the film industry as the collective and inspiring entity we believe it to be.

words: Lizzy Kittle

Preview: The Oscars

The BAFTAs may be over for another year but the show must go on. Next up in the awards season is the Oscars. Leeds Student gives you the lowdown on this year's awards.



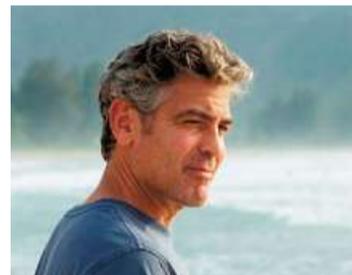
Best Picture

Hugo leads nominations at this year's Academy Awards having received a total of eleven nods, including 'Best Director' for Martin Scorsese. Despite being the event's most featured film, it faces stiff competition from *The Artist*, as the silent movie that talked the talk at the BAFTAs is favourite to bag the award. Also featuring is World War I film *War Horse* and a fifth nomination at the event for producer Scott Rudin for *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*.



Leading Actress

It's Maggie versus Marilyn as all eyes are on Meryl Streep or Michelle Williams to scoop the leading lady prize for their performances in *The Iron Lady* and *My Week with Marilyn* respectively. Following Streep's success at the Golden Globes and last week's BAFTAs, Williams may be left disappointed. Meanwhile, Glenn Close is nominated for playing Albert Nobbs in the film of the same name about a woman who chooses to live life as a man to avoid the pressures facing women in 19th century Ireland. Also nominated in this category are Viola Davis and *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo's* Rooney Mara.



Leading Actor

For his critically acclaimed performance in *The Descendants*, George Clooney has a chance to add another Oscar to his mantlepiece. Clooney previously scooped the 'Best Supporting Actor' award for his role in 2005 geopolitical thriller *Syriana*. Brit Gary Oldman receives his first nomination for his role in the mind-boggling *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*; whilst this is the third time that Moneyball star Brad Pitt has been recognised.



Supporting Actress

Despite losing out on the 'Leading Actress' award at the BAFTAs to Meryl Streep, *The Artist's* Bérénice Bejo stands a good chance of winning the 'Supporting Actress' Oscar. The actress has been catapulted to international stardom for her portrayal of Peppy Miller in the silent hit, which was directed by her husband Michel Hazanavicius. Alongside Bejo, *Bridesmaids'* Michelle McCarthy is a first time nominee. Albert Nobbs star Janet McTeer is the only actress to feature in the category that has previously been nominated.



Supporting Actor

Christopher Plummer, probably best known to you and I as Captain Vonn Trap in *The Sound of Music* is up for the award for starring alongside Ewan McGregor in *Beginners*. Funnyman Jonah Hill is the youngest contender in the category, receiving his first Oscar nod for his part in sports drama *Moneyball*, whilst Nick Nolte is up for his role in *Warrior*. Max von Sydow and Kenneth Branagh also make the shortlist.

Who do you think should win? Which films have the Academy missed out this year? Go online at www.leedsstudent.org and tell us what you think.

The 84th Academy Awards will air on February 26th on Sky Movies.

words: Ryan Baulk

Art: Five Truths



The Howard Assembly Room

14 - 25 February (Mon-Sat), 2pm - 8pm

Five Truths, a video installation first devised in the Theatre rooms of the Victoria and Albert museum, has finally arrived in Leeds. British avant-garde director Katie Mitchell was invited by the London's infamous museum of art and design to create a video installation based on the tricky subject of 'truth in performance', a never-ending debate regarding acting and the styles that can be found upon the stage.

Katie Mitchell chose to focus her project on what can arguably be named the top five theatre practitioners of the last century; Brecht, Stanislavski, Artaud, Brook and Grotowski. Through exploring the different methods these practitioners place on directing and acting, she hoped to discover how it is possible to create 'truth' in performance. She takes Shakespeare's Ophelia from Hamlet and transcends the char-

acter and play into five intricate films, performed by Michelle Terry.

When entering the installation one is greeted by a large room with very dim lighting. On the left is a small pool of flowers and to the right a lavender path lead-

ing up to a large black box in the centre of the space. When entering the box you are met by a multiscreen installation surrounding you with a variety of sounds and images. Each of the five short films runs a similar timing with the common theme of language,

sustaining an important link between all five.

Terry's Ophelia is outstanding to watch, making it very hard to keep your eyes on more than one performance at a time. You are constantly forgetting about the numerous other videos surround-

ing you. Whether you are already clear with the practitioner's schools or not, Katie Mitchell has successfully keyed into each effectively, whilst still bringing new clarity to the fascinating character of Shakespeare's Ophelia.

“New clarity is brought to the fascinating character of Shakespeare's Ophelia.”

If you're after an alternative from the more traditionally structured performances currently running, Mitchell's installation will definitely give you both a creative and original insight into the truth behind performance.

words: Ellie Hanbury



Five Truths video installation, photo: Tom Arbour Photography

Feature: Is CGI a step too far?

Technology has, naturally, always been closely linked to film. The addition of sound and colour stand out as turning points in the medium's history and in the past decades we've seen computer generated imagery and 3D come to the forefront. The staying power of 3D

has yet to be seen, but CGI has certainly made its mark, turning what used to only be plausible in hand drawn animation into almost reality.

CGI characters can interact with real life actors in real locations. But with the growth of this technology

comes an ever decreasing use of practical effects in films. Advanced effects have greatly helped the superhero and science fiction genres but, particularly in the latter, we can see a dependence on CGI when practical effects have formerly been seen to shine. More and more films

rely on actors in front of a blue screen and the surroundings to be added digitally rather be filmed on location. Does this not make the film less realistic, knowing that, no matter how realistic the world is, it still isn't real?

Compare a crowd scene from a classic and a more recent Star Wars film. In the old we see atmosphere and depth that using a few background puppets brings, but in the new we get bustling messes of creatures, all shapes and sizes, flying by without a moment to appreciate them. From the new we see quantity, and from the old we get quality.

“From the new we see quantity, and from the old we get quality.”

I'm not saying CGI is a bad thing. It has without a doubt radicalised the animation genre, delivering Toy Story as the first feature length CGI film which kick-started a new age of animation brilliance led by Pixar. But looking at children's cinema

now, it is a highly CG-saturated field. Out of the top one hundred highest grossing films last year, seventeen of them were kid's films and only two of those were not made with major CGI. These were *Diary of a Wimpy Kid 2* and *The Muppets*, the latter of which stands out a notable film for its constant pokes at our over-reliance on technology.

In *The Muppets* characters ironically cry out "This 3D is amazing" when watching a live stage show, there are no mobile phones or internet and, save a dream sequence with them appearing from a television, no computer effects added to the Muppets at all. We're even treated to an 80s robot character just to drive home how we don't need modern technology. Is there not something slightly magical in seeing the old-fashioned puppetry in use? It would have been so easy to re-vamp the Muppet brand with an animated film, but instead we get the old-fashioned, imperfect and, more importantly, real Muppets that we know and love. I wouldn't have it any other way.

words: James Story



A step too far?: Toy Story 3

The Rise of the 'Graphic Novel'

Beginning in the 1920s, the graphic novel is still one of the newest sub-genres. In its mix of comic art and caption, the definition of the graphic novel as a literary genre is constantly up for discussion. In a bid to persuade you of its many virtues, James Story investigates...

'Graphic novels' are a medium you've likely heard of but have never read. They have a rich history, a wealth of classic stories and characters and make up a multi-million dollar industry. Despite this, they still have a certain lack of social status when compared to other media. Comics have, since their beginning, trod an uneasy path with waves and lulls of popularity, but as we polish off the latest series of Walking Dead, play a few hours of Batman: Arkham City and head out to pre-order those Avengers tickets we've been waiting for, it's clear to see graphic novels, and their characters, are on the up again.

Superheroes are, undoubtedly, the backbone of comics and graphic novels. A walk down any busy high-street will undoubtedly yield at least one Superman shirt. The images of these alter-egos have permeated popular culture to a point where we all know who they are, regardless of whether we read comics or not. The recent resurgence in comic book films has done wonders for the industry. DC has even taken the bold move of completely re-launching their titles. New stories, new issue #1s. The perfect time for new readers.

But starting to read graphic novels can be a daunting position and one I can sympathise with and relate to. With such a long history, where do you start when you consider reading, for example, X-Men? The current run?

Uncanny X-men? New X-Men? Astonishing X-Men? With such a long history and countless spin-offs, re-brands and off-shoots simply picking where to start can quickly turn confusing and off-putting. The truth is that graphic novels can be picked up

“The images of these alter-egos have permeated popular culture, regardless of whether we read comics or not.”

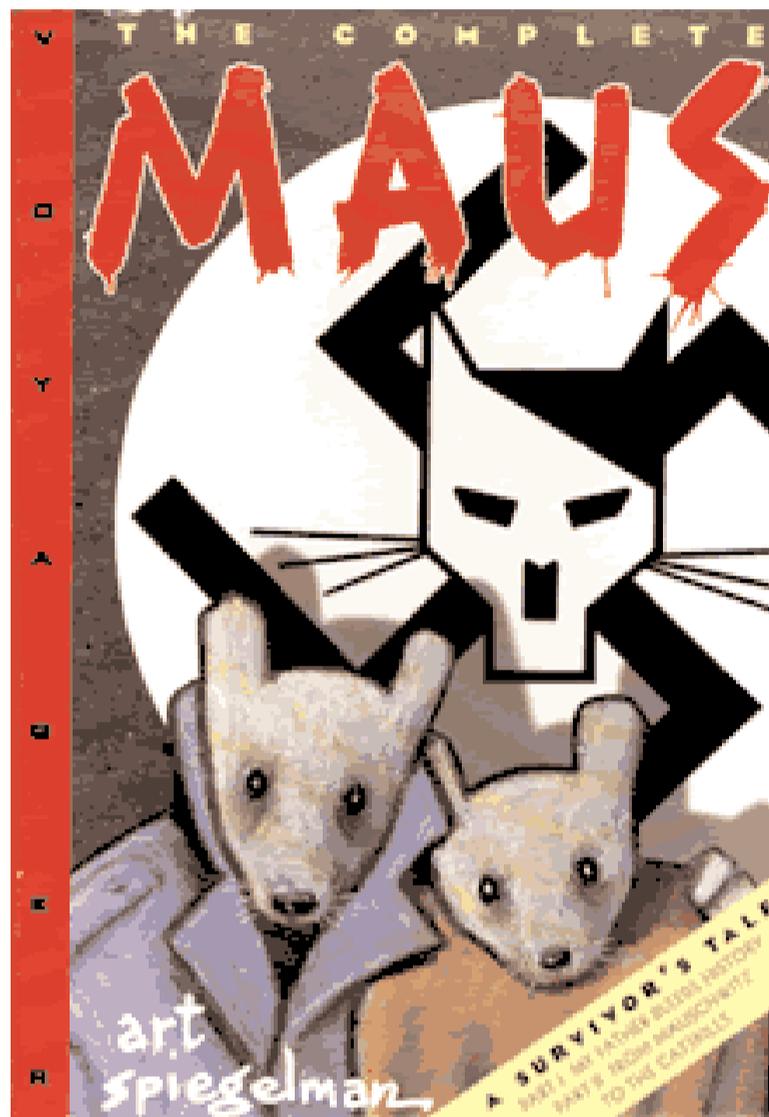
at almost any point. No-one expects you to have read the entire seventy year old history of Batman and writers know this, dropping in hints to the medium's past without letting it get in the way those reading their first stories.

The growth in popularity can be

seen all around the city of Leeds. The annual Thought Bubble comic convention goes from strength to strength; independent creators sell their own books throughout the town and the university's own Comic & Graphic Novel society, only in its third year, continues to flourish. It's a society founded on introducing others to the medium and encouraging wider reading. Their treasurer, Ali Hawkes, praises graphic novels for their art and believes that they "have just as much capacity for beautiful imagery and deep stories as any piece of prose." One common misconception when you hear the term 'graphic novel' is its instant association with superheroes.

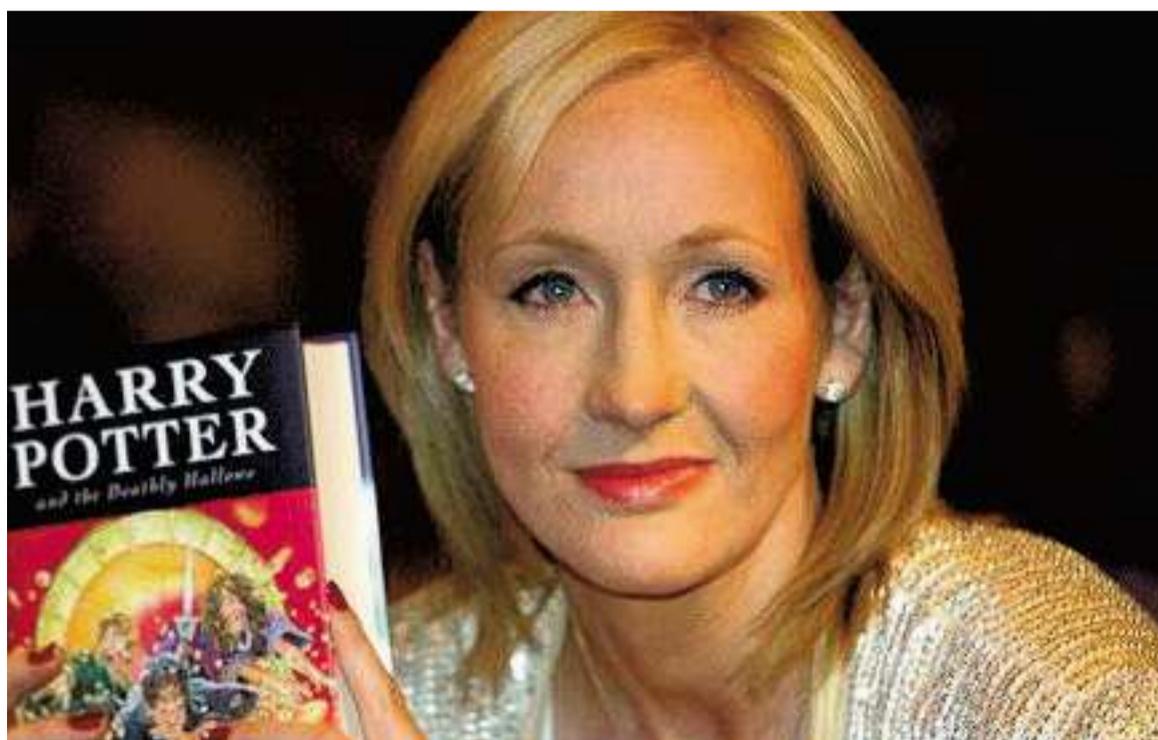
As I've said, you can see their histories are closely linked, but they are far from the only way to enjoy the graphic medium. Art Spiegelman's Maus is a Pulitzer Prize winning piece that depicts the horrors of the Holocaust; Garth Ennis' Preacher is an action packed thriller about a man looking for God after harnessing the power of a demon; Bill Willingham's Fables brings our classic fairytale characters to life in modern New York and Neil Gaiman's Sandman series is an eloquent stroll through the history of literature and mythology. Graphic novels have a rich library of incredibly stories and wonderful artwork just waiting for you to jump into.

words: James Story



(Literary) News Matrix

We digest this week's (literary) news so you don't have to



1. **J. K. Rowling has announced that she will be releasing a new book**, although this time the novel will be aimed at an older audience. The new novel, which she has already finished, does not have a release date and no title or information has been released about its content. All that the author

has said is that the new novel will be "very different" from the hugely successful Harry Potter series, which have sold over 450 million worldwide. Some, including Ian Rankin, have predicted that her new novel will be a mystery thriller. As well as shifting in age range she is also changing pub-

lishers, moving from Bloomsbury to a smaller publishing house.

2. **Amanda Knox has signed a reported \$4 million book deal** to give her account of the events after the murder of Meredith Kercher in Perugia, Italy. After having arrived back

on American soil there has been speculation over how Knox would respond to the intense media attention on her over the last five years. And after having previously not discussed her story with the press, the book offers her an opportunity to tell her side of the situation and of what happened to her over the course of the case. As of yet no release date has been announced.

3. **Alexandra Singer, who spent three months in a coma and has suffered from memory loss, is to see the novel she had once written published**, despite not remembering having the idea for it. After suffering from cerebral lupus, Singer was told that she might suffer from paralysis and would not be able to read or write. Her brother found the unfinished manuscript to her novel 'Tea at the Grand Tazi' in her flat and brought it to the hospital encouraging her to finish it. In finishing her book she relearned how to read and write. 'Tea at the Grand Tazi' is published next month.

4. **A collection of comic books has sold for \$3.5 million.** The selection of 345 comics, which were bought by American Billy Wright as a child, was virtually untouched when they were sold, dramatically increasing their value. Amongst the comics was De-

fective comic No. 27 featuring the first appearance of Batman, and Action Comic No. 1, Superman's debut feature. The collector, who died in 1994, had collected the comics in his childhood, starting the 1930s. His family were unaware of the incredible collection he had stashed away, which was found in the basement of his home in Virginia years after he had died.

5. **Bloomsbury publishers are to set up a new business in India** due to the large demand for books from the English-speaking middle-classes there. Around 50 millions Indians buy English language books and the new business is due to fulfill the high demand for English literature. Over the last 25 years, Bloomsbury titles have been distributed in India via Penguin publishing house. Bloomsbury is now planning to expand their own business in the city of Delhi, enabling them to distribute their books without Penguin. With the growing importance of India's rapidly expanding economy the publishers will be able to exploit India's developing industry.

words: Olivia Howard

Film: Avengers Assemble



Director: Joss Whedon

Starring: Robert Downey Jr, Mark Ruffalo, Scarlett Johansson, Chris Hemsworth, Chris Evans, Jeremy Renner, Tom Hiddleston, Samuel L Jackson

I don't know where to start. Iron Man is awesome. Thor is awesome. Captain America is awesome. The Hulk is so awesome. Even the bad guys are...you guessed it, awesome. In fact, the only thing not awesome about it is the name, a last minute adjustment to avoid confusion in Britain with the TV series. I gave myself bit of time having watched *Avengers Assemble* in order to gather my thoughts and get over the giddy excitement that the whole experience left me feeling, and yet all I can think of is how awesome this film is.

There are so many reasons that *Avengers Assemble* is such an enjoyable film. First of all there's the intense satisfaction that this film is finally here. Then there's the fact that these characters with huge per-

sonalities all gel together so well; in fact the relationships that we watch develop are one of the film's strongest points.

The Incredible Hulk – a much loved character for Marvel fans – is portrayed practically perfectly. Much must be granted to Mark Ruffalo who stepped into the well-trodden shoes of the big, green man – taking over from Edward Norton, whose portrayal was widely considered the best yet – and demonstrated that there's more to Bruce Banner's alter-ego than just getting angry and smashing things (but don't worry there's still a lot of that). Ruffalo's performance provides Banner's tale with tragedy; for example, he explains how he once tried to put a bullet through his head "but the other guy spit it out."

The action sequences are everything that their counter-parts in, say, *Transformers* are not: truly exhilarating. Furthermore director Joss Whedon gets the jokes completely right; Stark's dry sarcasm is ever present, Thor's Shakespearean tongue makes for some amusing exchanges and the Hulk's strength is put to brilliant comic effect.



Chris Evans in Captain America
Image: allmoviephoto.com

While much of what is great about *Avengers Assemble* must be attributed to Whedon's brilliant direction, it is ultimately the strength of these fascinating and much-

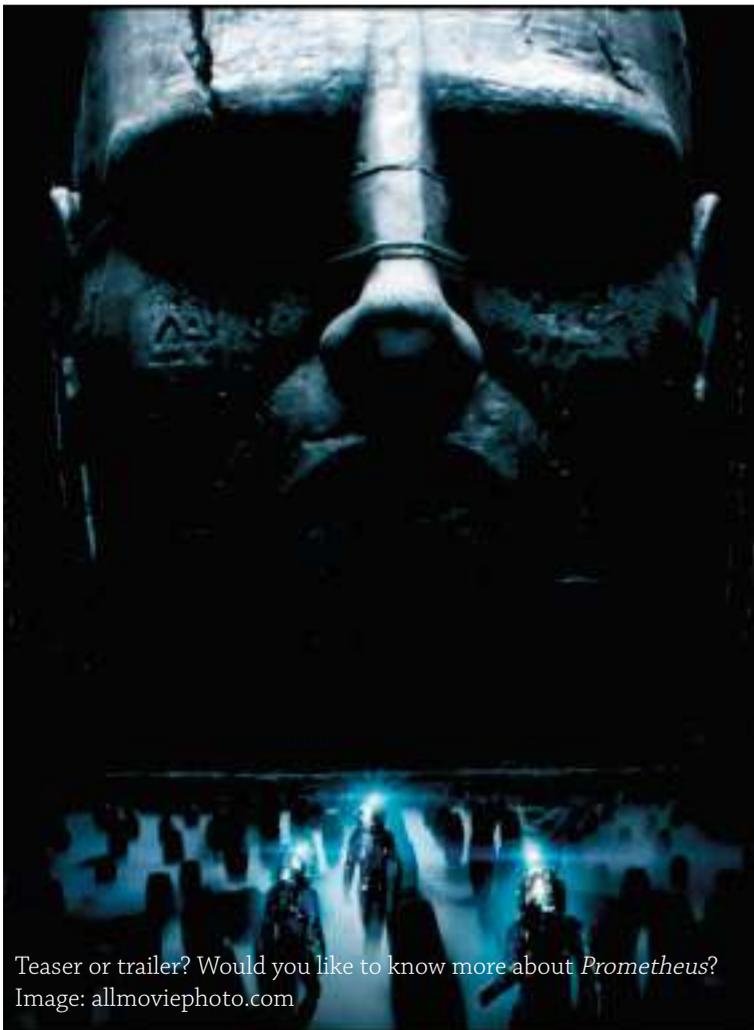
loved characters that shines through; I repeatedly found myself with goose bumps when another hero entered the fray. It goes without saying, but the other superhero

films out there – like *The Dark Knight Rises* and *The Amazing Spider-Man* - have a whole lot of awesome to live up to.

words: Peter West

Feature: Fact - Trailers can ruin films

James Story asks 'How many times have you watched a film and realised you'd seen all the best bits in the trailer?'



Teaser or trailer? Would you like to know more about *Prometheus*?
Image: allmoviephoto.com

Before everyone was asking each other if they had seen *Avengers Assemble*, the hot topic amongst movie-goers was Joss Whedon's other project, *The Cabin in the Woods*. While *Avengers* surely needs no other introduction than "it's all your favourite superheroes being awesome" the same cannot be said for *Cabin*. "What is it about?" is our first question in deciding whether to see a film, but to say what *Cabin in the Woods* is about is to take a lot away from the experience of finding it out. It's such an original film that it almost must be seen completely cold to get the most enjoyment out of it and this brings me to a problem that has plagued Hollywood film since the horror films of the 1980s. Trailers can ruin movies.

How many times have you watched a comedy film and realised you've heard the best jokes before you went in? Or the climactic showdown at the end of an action blockbuster? Or a particularly gruesome death from a horror film? As much as I loved *The Muppets'* cavalcade of movie spoofs in their trailer campaign, I couldn't help but think I had seen most of the gags a few months before the movie itself. I know several people who try their best to stay

away from trailers for upcoming movies but considering you have to sit through at least five every time you go to the cinema, it can be quite challenging.

“It isn't hard for a trailer to sell a film without giving away the best bits”

The problem is the people who are in charge of marketing the films aren't the ones who have been making them. All they are concerned about is taking the best footage they have and putting it on show so the most people possible will want to see the movie. This certainly fulfils the marketing quota of their job, but it has no consideration for the

movie goers' experience. Every now and again you see just how clued in the marketers of the films are when you find one that has been totally miss-sold to you. For those who have seen it (and I highly recommend that you do) one look at the trailers for Quentin Tarantino's *Inglorious Bastards* sets it up to be a ruthless, violent, fast action film whereas those who have seen it know it is a slow, tense wartime drama.

It isn't terribly hard for a trailer to sell a film and not giveaway its best moments, which is why teasers are the best solution. The internet practically went nuts when the *Prometheus* teaser came out. The ominous music, the text slowly pulling in and the constant cutting between short clips that gets you pumped up for the movie without explicitly telling you anything really. With viral marketing and constant internet sponsorships I kindly ask you to try and stay away from trailers for the movies you want to see and I bet you'll get more out of them in the end. And when you finally do go see *Avengers Assemble*, afterwards think 'how much of that was I expecting?'