

4 Reviews

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These reviews were written for inclusion on a reviews-based website. At the time of writing the site is not yet live, so I won't give the address.

FILMS:

Syriana - intelligent cinema done well

A man walks towards the camera. He doesn't flinch as the car behind him explodes. Carrying more weight than we usually see on him, and with a thick grey beard, this is George Clooney doing his 'other' thing.

Syriana is the another of Clooney's less populist, more thoughtful films, once again a product of his own Section 8 film company - producers of the Ocean's Eleven films - which he ran until March 2007 with director Steven Soderbergh.

It is a complex film about the ownership of oil, the turbulence of world economies, and the many ways in which we are all affected by decisions taken at the highest levels. As such, it has no single clear storyline, but instead weaves together a number of plots with an ever-expanding roll-call of characters. You need to pay attention to get the most out of this film and despite an explosive climax, it doesn't have a neat payoff, instead leaving you to draw your own conclusions from a web of hints and comments.

This is intelligent cinema done well and bears multiple viewings.

Post-modern Comedy Noir ... how refreshing.

Kiss Kiss Bang Bang is a difficult film to categorise as it crosses so many boundaries. It has all the trappings of a classic film noir, the snappy dialogue, the femme fatale, the convoluted plot and the way the leading man who seems to just wander around while things happen to him. But it's not black and white, the detective is actually a thief who has mistakenly ended up coming to Hollywood for a screen-test to play a fictional detective. The real detective is called Gay Perry. It's far from your usual film noir.

Add to this the wonderful voiceover provided by Robert Downey Jr, including his ability to rewind the film when he misses something out, and you have a completely different type of film.

Not a big hit at the box office, this film deserves to be a cult classic. Great acting, great script, great directing: great film.

MUSIC:

Mixing the New with the Old

To a certain group of people in Glasgow, Franz Ferdinand were already old news by the time their first album was released. To the rest of the world, they seemed to appear, fully formed, on the musical stage. Their sound was polished and tight - listen again to the matched rhythms of guitar, bass and drums in 'Take Me Out' or 'Darts Of Pleasure' - but at the same time raw and bursting with energy. This was a new band doing something unexpected and everyone was forced to sit up and take notice.

But this was also a band that knew its history. At times sounding like early Adam and the Ants, at others like Blondie, this was a band that would have fit perfectly into the 'New Wave' of the early '80s.

As an album it perhaps needed some rough edges smoothing out, but this was undoubtedly a band that knew where it had come from and where it was going.

Caress of Rush

In the literature about Rush, whether official or not, on paper or online, there always seems to be little to say about Caress of Steel. This is surely a lack of foresight? Not only does it open with one of their all-time crown pleasers - 'Bastille Day' - but it also contains the mellow beauty that is 'Lakeside Park'. Admittedly, there is also the distinctly un-Rush-like 'I Think I'm Going Bald'. This song has its tongue firmly in its cheek, which is not something we expect from Rush.

However, it is in the other two sections - 'The Necromancer' and 'The Fountain of Lamneth' that the album comes into its own. Two sections which could, in other hands, be muddy and overlong, merely extend the story-telling that the band had started on *Fly By Night*, and paved the way for the concept-album majesty that was to come - *2112* and *Hemispheres*.

Verdict? A much underestimated gem.