

Tropix Newsletter

Program Two, 5 June - 23 July, 2017





A message from our programmers...

Happy Dry Season! We hope you are enjoying this beautiful weather. We've put together some extra words for our program two choices! Read on intrepid movie lovers...

- Di, Neil, Laura, Liz and Alex



LOVING

Jeff Nichols clearly paid attention to other filmmaking traditions, including ones within America — the great John Ford comes to mind — where communication is via glances and gestures as much as dialogue. His new film, the true story of a mixed race couple in 1950s Virginia fighting a racist state law that forbid them to live as a married couple, never forces words into the mouths of its characters: where a glance will suffice, a glance is all we get.

Richard and Mildred Loving grew up in a pocket of Virginia where whites and blacks mixed relatively freely. They married, however, in defiance of the law, suffered jail as a result and were forced to cross state borders and live in the city until eventually they found help from civil rights lawyer Bernie Cohen. In what might have been a self-conscious exercise of historical fist pumping, Nichols' sparse film remains an exercise in restraint. - *Di*

It is refreshing to find a film with no emotional manipulation, prompting us to allow our gut instincts to guide us. the two central performances by Joel Edgerton and Ruth Negga are subtle and underplayed - beautifully.

- *Louise Keller*

BEDEVIL

Tracey Moffatt is the Australian representative this year at the 57th Venice Biennale. Moffatt is presenting MY HORIZON – an installation which comprises all new work, including large-scale photography and film on display March to November.

Tracey Moffatt's film, beDevil is inspired by ghost stories she heard as a child from both her extended Aboriginal and Irish Australian families. She has constructed a sublime trilogy in which characters are haunted by the past and bewitched by memories. All three stories are set in Moffatt's highly stylized, hyper-real, hyper-imaginary Australian landscape. In the first story MISTER CHUCK, a young boy is fascinated and terrified by a swamp that is haunted by the ghost of an American GI. CHOO CHOO CHOO CHOO finds a family living by railroad tracks haunted by strange happenings. The mother (played by Moffatt) is drawn to the tracks at night as she senses the horror of a past tragedy. The final story, LOVIN' THE SPIN I'M IN, follows a woman who resists eviction attempts by her landlord so she can keep vigil for her dead son.

Geoff Burton, who was the cinematographer on the film will be our guest and introduce the film. - *Di*

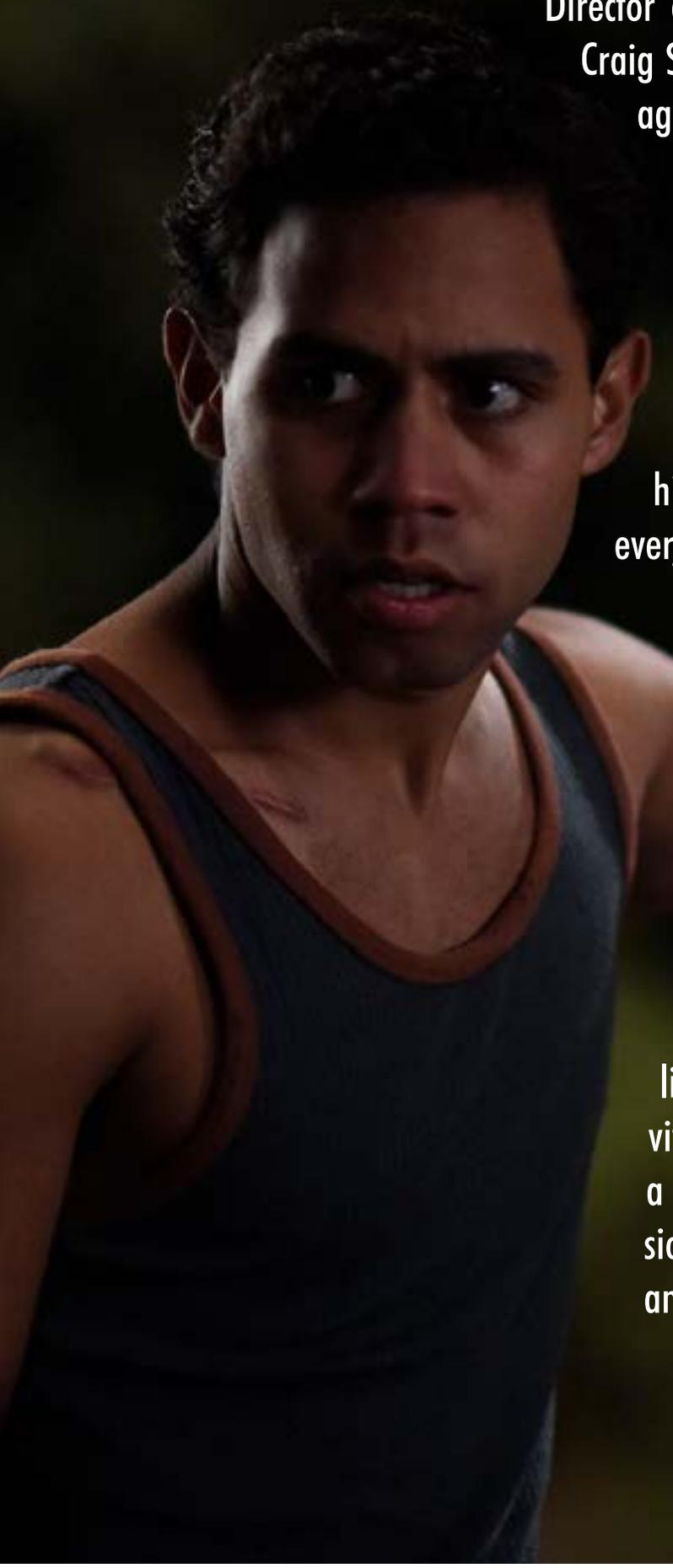


JASPER JONES

Director of *Bran Nue Dae*, Rachel Perkins brings Craig Silvey's much loved Australian coming-of-age story to the big screen.

In the dead of night during the scorching summer of 1969, Charlie is startled when he is woken by local mixed-race outcast Jasper Jones outside his window. Jasper leads him deep into the forest and shows him something that will change his life forever, setting them both on a dangerous journey to solve a mystery that will consume the entire community. In an isolated town where secrecy, gossip and tragedy overwhelm the landscape, Charlie faces family breakdown, finds his first love, and discovers what it means to be truly courageous.

When it was first published, West Australian novelist Craig Silvey's *Jasper Jones* invited comparisons to American classic *To Kill a Mockingbird*. This is a story about compassion and justice that will appeal to teenagers and adults alike. - *Alex*





THEIR FINEST

Their Finest is a clever, charming and funny movie from Danish director Lone Scherfig. Adding to her most well-known films, *An Education* and *The Riot Club*.

One of the strengths of this film is its glorious sense of place and time. The locations and production design are a real asset. The daily threat of the Blitz is given sufficient screen time to feel like an ever-present menace, while wartime London and an idyllic Cornish coast are well realised.

Their Finest is at its best when the lines between the movie we are watching and the movie being produced on screen are blurred. We see the characters and plot of "The Nancy Starling" the film within the film, evolve within Catrin's mind in a series of comic scenes which give Bill Nighy's character, ageing actor Ambrose Hilliard, some of his best moments.

Their Finest is a wonderful send-up of propaganda movie-making of the 1940s and a worthy war film in its own right. Think of *In Which We Serve*, *Casablanca* or *40,000 Hoursemen*. - *Neil*



HELL OR HIGHWATER

Scottish director David Mackenzie employs the keen eye of an outsider to evoke this very particular world (although the film was shot not in Texas but in New Mexico). The film is firmly planted in reality, down to the smallest detail (the cafe waitress who informs her customers proudly that she serves only T-bone steaks and then goes on to reminisce about the New Yorker who, back in the 1980s,

was dumb enough to ask for fish). The protagonists of the film, Toby and Tanner are brothers who are angry and frustrated at the way banks, especially the Texas Midland Bank, have treated them — and they're determined to be avenged; they're the Bonnie and Clyde of their day. The major performances are spot on, with Bridges giving one of his finest late performances as the ageing

cop. Hell or High Water is a thriller with something to say about contemporary America, a message it delivers without thrusting it down the throat of the viewer. It's a small gem. - *David Stratton*

With intense performances from its great cast, David Mackenzie's neo-Western is an effective combination of adrenaline, humour and melancholy. - *Carlos Maghaleos*

THINGS TO COME (L'AVENIR)

As the Rousseau quote declares, desire is the enemy of happiness. Our failed satisfactions are based upon the desire for something new — which, once achieved, no longer satisfies.

Isabel has lived through the political temptations of her time, from her flirtation with communism through the '68 revolution. She's not tempted by the current students' strike for pensions or her star ex-student Fabien's anarchism. In contrast, her husband stays stuck in the attitudes he held at 18 and has the rigidity and insensitivity to tyrannize his students.

In all of this Isabel has to cope with a divorce as her husband's abandonment for a younger woman, the death of her mother, and her publisher rejecting her book.

Isabelle Huppert's portrait of a woman, who has settled into middle-age, neither particularly happy nor particularly unhappy, again shows why she is France's most go-to person for films.

- Neil





OUR LITTLE SISTER

It is a richly pleasing film... bringing in the classic imagery from the Japanese provincial family drama: rural train journeys, group meals, and discussions linking family and food, thoughtful bucolic walks uphill — denoting humility and patience — melancholy funerals and some wonderful seasonal compositions.

Self-effacingly and unobtrusively, the director gives an easy swing to

this quartet's life, moving calmly from the home to the school, from the private sphere to the fraught public world of the workplace. Nothing is emphasised too much, voices are not raised very greatly, even in moments of great stress; nothing in the drama or the direction is very strenuous, and yet it accumulates in power. Just as when I saw this the first time, I loved Suzu's innocently ecstatic ride on the

back of a bicycle, turning her face to the sunlight. Watching this film is a vitamin boost for the soul. - *Peter Bradshaw, The Guardian (Recommended by Di)*

If you're looking for something to lift you up and take you away from the tumult and anguish of the moment, seek out "Our Little Sister." - *Joe Morgenstern, Wall Street Journal*

A SILENT VOICE

A Silent Voice captures various mature and serious topics, packed into a wonderfully animated 2 hour feature. It deals with topics such as: social anxiety, fitting in, bullying, suicide, all such that wouldn't be expected in a teenage romance/drama anime that we were led to believe. No, a silent voice tries to capture a much broader idea with a reasonable amount success.

Though the film has a female protagonist, a deaf girl she really isn't the centrepiece of this film, this film really takes a much more in depth look at our male protagonist, the bully. This is quite a refreshing view from the lens of someone on the other side of most modern-day films and takes an unconventional look from a very interesting angle, while sidelining the romance as a brief sub-plot. This film at its core is about trying to fit in and the notion of being isolated but it was also highlighted that it was very important for one to get over their own guilt and to quite literally "face the world again".

This anime that is currently sweeping the charts of Japanese and Asian box offices a great children's film for the family. -
Neil





A BAG OF MARBLES

Built around wonderful performances by its two young stars, French film *Un Sac de Billets* (A Sack of Marbles) is drawn from the best-selling autobiographical novel by Joseph Joffo.

The film — which also stars the French actor / singer / champion professional poker player Patrick Bruel — tells the story of two Jewish brothers who live

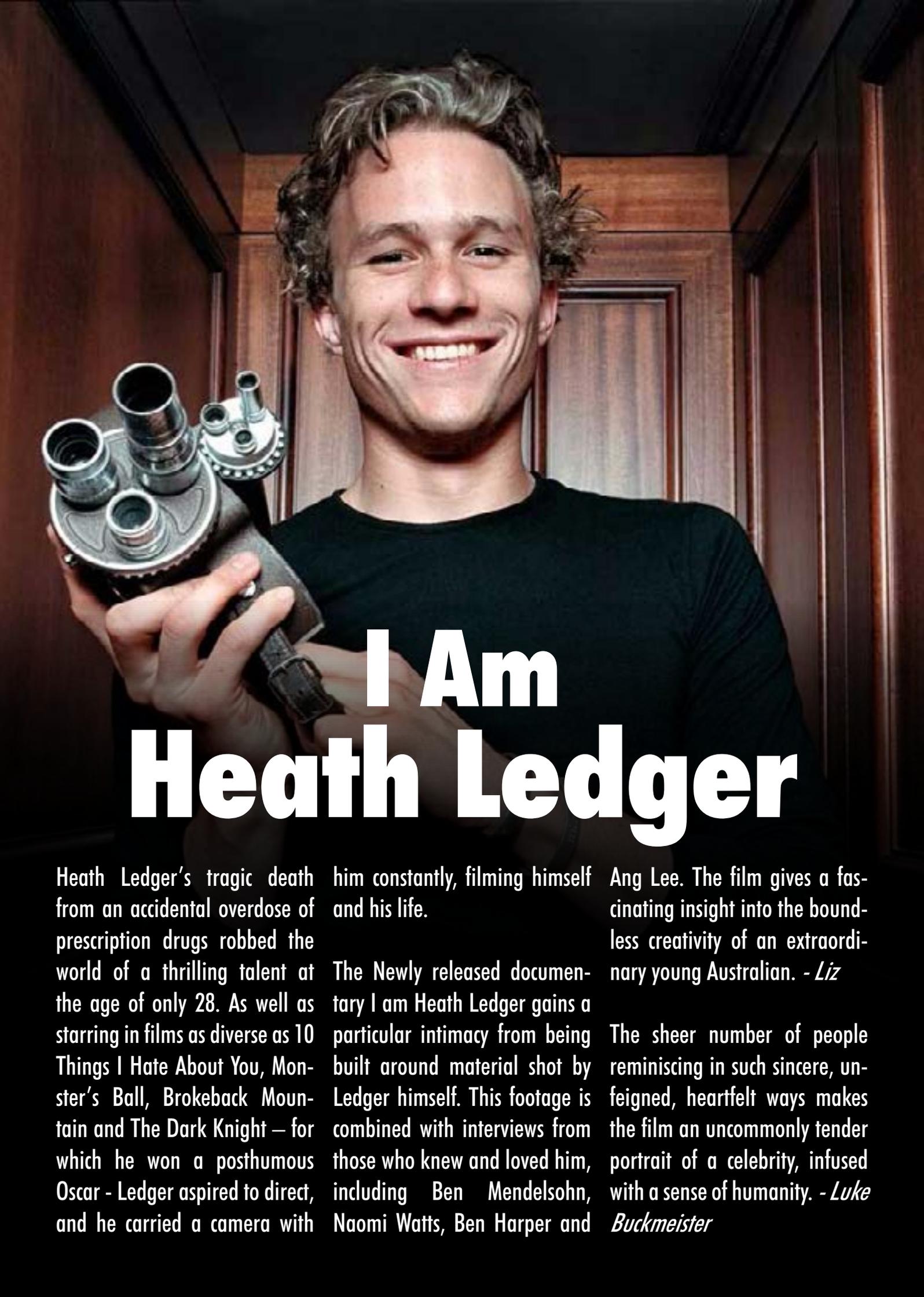
with their parents in Nazi-occupied Paris. Their parents develop a plan for the family to flee to the 'free zone', but decide that it is safer to travel in pairs. The boys flee the city with armed only with money, a map and their ingenuity.

With painstaking attention to period detail and beautiful cinematography of the French countryside, *A Bag*

of Marbles is a moving story of the Holocaust from a child's perspective. - *Liz*

The movie's strength is that it follows the rhythm of the boys' journey, and mixes the comedy and tragedy well, often in the course of a single scene. The script highlights the brothers' resilience, as well as their vulnerability.

- *Hannah Brown*



I Am Heath Ledger

Heath Ledger's tragic death from an accidental overdose of prescription drugs robbed the world of a thrilling talent at the age of only 28. As well as starring in films as diverse as *10 Things I Hate About You*, *Monster's Ball*, *Brokeback Mountain* and *The Dark Knight* – for which he won a posthumous Oscar – Ledger aspired to direct, and he carried a camera with

him constantly, filming himself and his life.

The Newly released documentary *I am Heath Ledger* gains a particular intimacy from being built around material shot by Ledger himself. This footage is combined with interviews from those who knew and loved him, including Ben Mendelsohn, Naomi Watts, Ben Harper and

Ang Lee. The film gives a fascinating insight into the boundless creativity of an extraordinary young Australian. - *Liz*

The sheer number of people reminiscing in such sincere, unfeigned, heartfelt ways makes the film an uncommonly tender portrait of a celebrity, infused with a sense of humanity. - *Luke Buckmeister*



THE DEATH AND LIFE OF OTTO BLOOM

The hero, Otto Bloom (Xavier Samuel), lives backwards in time though not like Brad Pitt in *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, who ages in reverse.

What's unusual about him is not his appearance but his relation to experience: he remembers the future

and has no knowledge of the past.

This on a low budget, Australian Sci Fi film is styled as a pseudo-documentary chronicling Bloom's rise to fame in the 1980s and subsequent downfall, with talking-head interviewees including with the psychologist Dr Ada Fitzgerald,

ultimately the love of his life. Fitzgerald is played in simulated archival footage by Matilda Brown, and in the present day by Brown's real-life mother Rachel Ward.

Ward's performance is worth a visit to this film. - *Neil*



THE SALESMAN

Winner of this year's Academy Award for Best Foreign Film, *The Salesman* is a charged and quietly provocative insight into modern day Iran. Forced to leave their apartment due to a dangerous construction project in a neighboring building, a young Iranian couple moves to the center of Tehran where they become embroiled in a life-altering situation involving the previous tenant.

The Salesman is directed by Asghar Farhadi, who also helmed the Oscar-winning feature *A Separation*. Farhadi's films present a microcosm of modern Iran and the inevitable complications that arise, especially when interactions cross class and gender differences.

The Salesman became a totem for cultural resistance when Trump's proposed travel ban threatened to exclude this Iranian director from the Academy Awards, where *The Salesman* was nominated for best foreign language film. The ban was overturned, but Farhadi stayed away in protest anyway, further adding to the film's notoriety. - *Alex*



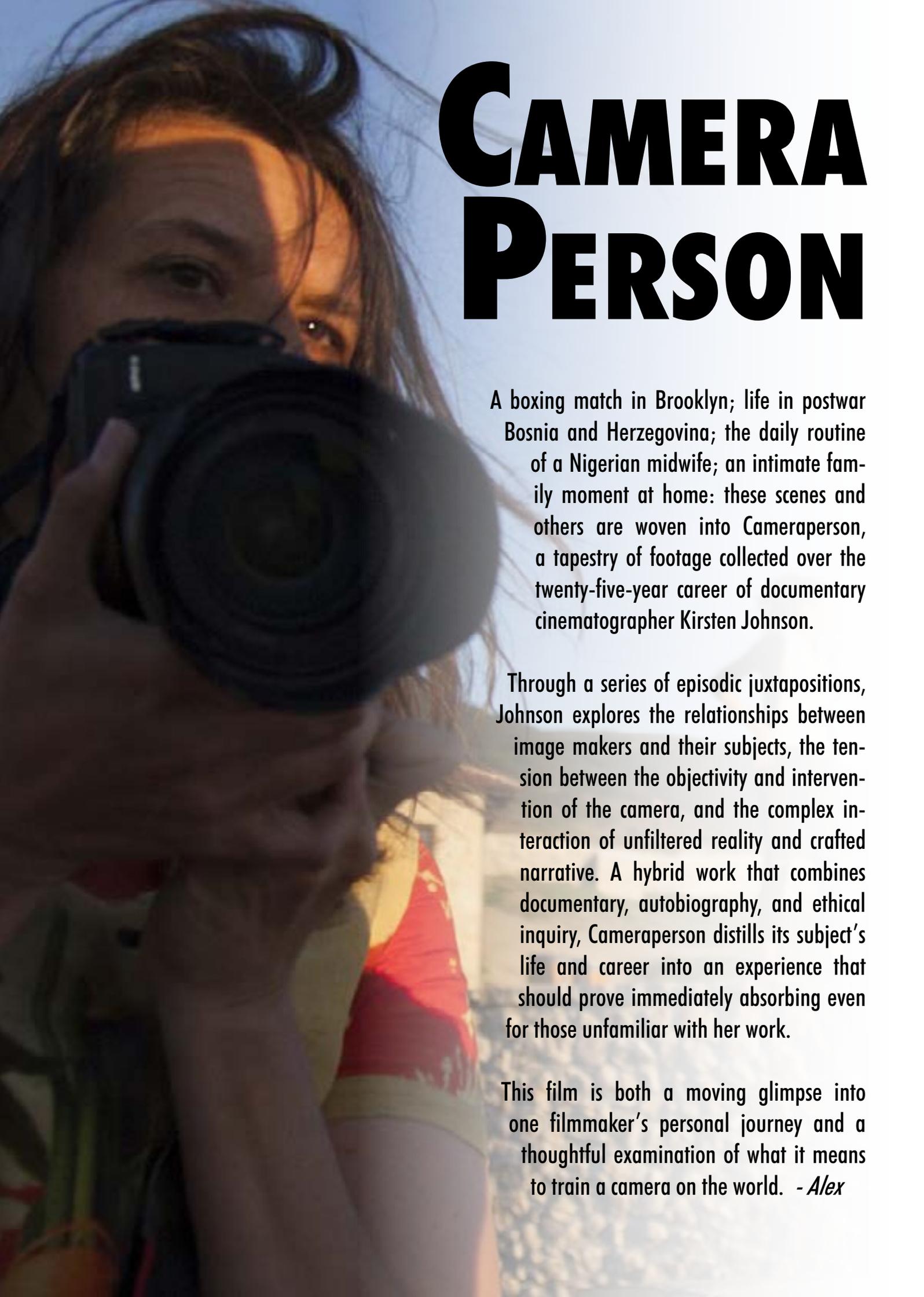
TRESPASS AGAINST US

Two of Ireland's — and cinema's — most exciting actors, Michael Fassbender and Brendan Gleeson, star in *Trespass Against Us*. Gleeson plays Colby Cutler, the patriarch of a family of 'travelers', an itinerant ethnic group which has typically lived outside mainstream society and the education system.

The family makes its living

from committing thefts around wealthy rural Gloucestershire. Colby's son (Fassbender) is expected to take over leadership of their activities, but decides that he wants a different future for his own young son. A power struggle ensues in which the older man draws his son into a heist, imperilling his attempts to break from a criminal way of life.

The film combines exciting action and skilfully filmed car chases with a family drama, and features strong chemistry between the two leads. *Trespass Against Us* was an Official Selection at the Toronto Film Festival and features a soundtrack from Grammy Award winning UK electronic music duo, The Chemical Brothers. - *Liz*

A close-up photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a red and yellow patterned top. She is holding a large black camera with a prominent lens up to her eye, looking through the viewfinder. The background is a bright, slightly blurred outdoor setting.

CAMERA PERSON

A boxing match in Brooklyn; life in postwar Bosnia and Herzegovina; the daily routine of a Nigerian midwife; an intimate family moment at home: these scenes and others are woven into *Cameraperson*, a tapestry of footage collected over the twenty-five-year career of documentary cinematographer Kirsten Johnson.

Through a series of episodic juxtapositions, Johnson explores the relationships between image makers and their subjects, the tension between the objectivity and intervention of the camera, and the complex interaction of unfiltered reality and crafted narrative. A hybrid work that combines documentary, autobiography, and ethical inquiry, *Cameraperson* distills its subject's life and career into an experience that should prove immediately absorbing even for those unfamiliar with her work.

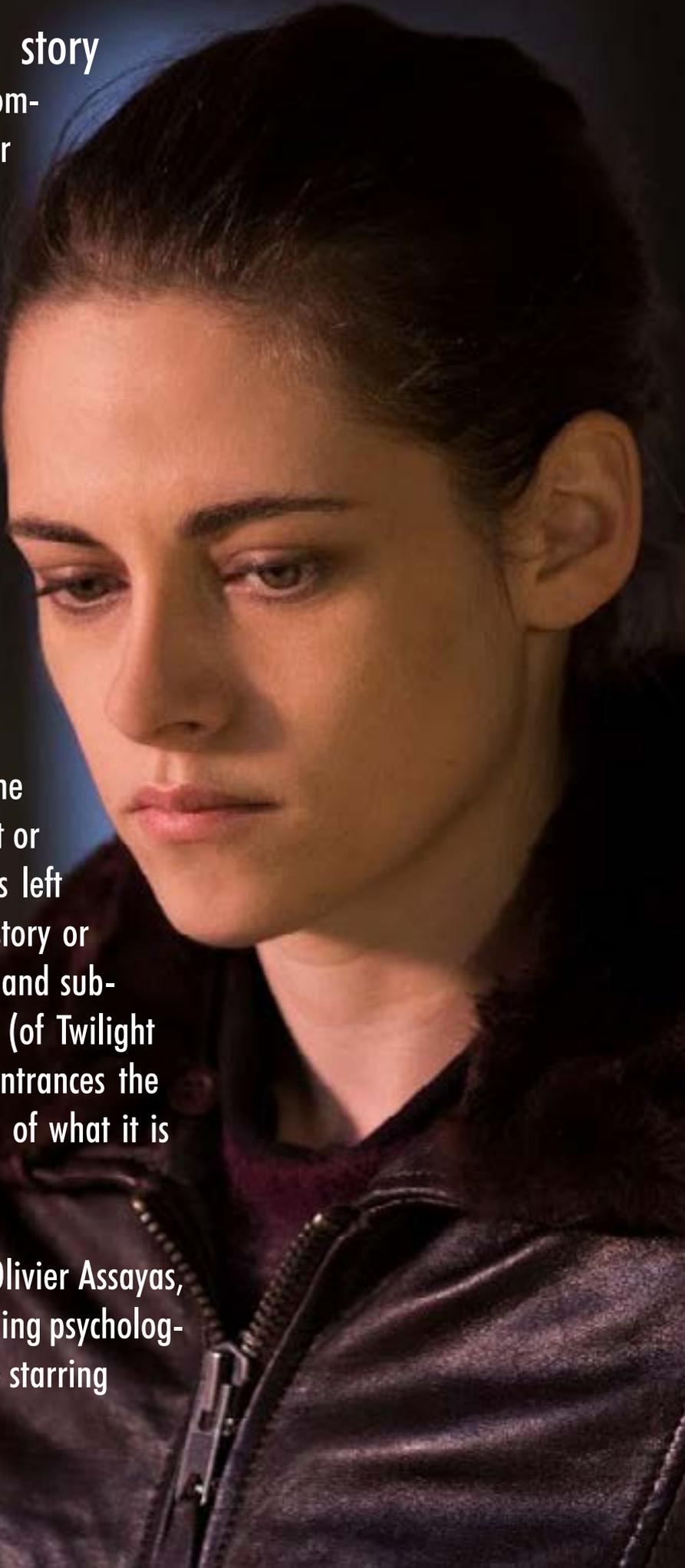
This film is both a moving glimpse into one filmmaker's personal journey and a thoughtful examination of what it means to train a camera on the world. - *Alex*

PERSONAL SHOPPER

Personal shopper tells the story of Maureen, a young American woman who works as a personal shopper for a celebrity in Paris, and is suffering from the recent trauma of losing her twin brother to a heart disease that she also suffers from. Ambivalent about her job, which both repels and tempts her, Maureen's true purpose in France is to be close to the rambling country house where her brother lived and died, in order to communicate with his spirit.

Never sure of whether contact with the ghost, if made, would be malevolent or cathartic for Maureen, the viewer is left to wonder whether this is a ghost story or an imagining. Featuring a mature and subtle performance by Kristen Stewart (of *Twilight* fame) as Maureen, the narrative entrances the viewer with its gripping exploration of what it is to be haunted.

The film is written and directed by Olivier Assayas, who directed the similarly disquietening psychological thriller *Clouds of Sils Maria*, also starring Kristen Stewart.



NERUDA

"We used his poetry to create the structure. Nothing is entirely serious. It is more based on poetry than anything else. Neruda's poetry was a virus that infected us all." - Pablo Larraín (Director)

Chilean Director, Pablo Larraín, brings to the screen a fictionalised account of the man hunt for legendary Nobel prize laureate poet, Pablo Neruda. Brilliant and self-obsessed, Neruda (Luis Gnecco) urges on a fantastic chase around late 1940s Chile, led by Inspector Peluchonneau (Gael García Bernal). The film opens on Neruda's offending comments as a member of the Chilean Parliament, where he represents the Communist Party, in speaking out against the oppressive regime of then President Gabriel González Videla. Quickly rendering him an enemy of the state, the film weaves a partly historical, highly stylised and entertaining cat-and-mouse chase across the country that faces off two charming and egotistical leads.

Larraín, who directed the recently acclaimed Jackie, another dramatised biography of a pivotal point in history, cleverly shows glimpses of the increasingly worsening fate of Chilean society, and precursors of military rule. It will delight anyone with an interest in Latin American history, politics and poetry, and draw in others not yet initiated into this fascinating world across the Pacific.

