

Frantz

The year is 1919. Anna (Paula Beer), a young German woman, visits the grave of her fiancé who died in the war. There, she discovers fresh flowers have already been laid. A foreigner – a Frenchman, no less – is grieving for the man she lost to a French bullet in an anonymous trench. The opening gambit of François Ozon’s elegant interwar romance invites us to second-guess the story that links Parisian musician Adrien Rivoire (Pierre Niney) to Anna’s late love, Frantz. Colour flashbacks are infused with inviting warmth, which contrasts with the black and white of a reality in which everyone mourns at least one loved one. There’s a pleasing symmetry to this story – lie is matched by lie, journey by journey – and Beer’s silky self-possession is utterly beguiling. Wendy Ide



Ernst Lubitsch was a Berliner who had moved to Hollywood and become celebrated for his “saucy” comedies that contained the sort of sexual innuendo that slipped past the censors, and became known as “the Lubitsch Touch”. One of his less successful films (it was the height of the Depression and audiences were weary of war films) was **Broken Lullaby**. Now the talented and prolific French director Francois Ozon has made a new version of the story, titled **Frantz – it** is one of Ozon’s best films and also one of his most

touching. The emotionally rich story works beautifully, hinging as it does on misunderstandings and misinterpretations. David Stratton

Compiled by Di

Handsome Devil

When you spend your life trying to be someone you are not, who is going to be you?! Ned, a fiercely independent teen at a rugby obsessed boarding school, struggles with the answer to this question. Isolated and bullied just because he is different, Ned figures that keeping his head down is the best option to endure the school year. Yet how quickly things can change. A dynamic teacher and omnipotent rugby star, each grappling with their own demons, transfer to the school. Meeting them is the worst and the best thing to happen to Ned. He discovers that what is more important than being cool, is what is beautiful. Yet beauty has its price.



In **Handsome Devil**, new twists are added to the familiar tale of a teen attempting to stand up in the face of bullying, and reconcile athletics with learning. The added perspectives include a faculty member and a star athlete who face harassment and threats as harsh as those faced by the main character. While the film is predictable in places and the scenes and acting not as exquisite as they

might be, I enjoyed the rich dialogue and the new angles on the characters. Think of **Dead Poets Society** with a twist

Compiled by Neil

Whiteley

Whiteley is a visual journey into the private life and creative legacy of Australia's most iconic artist, Brett Whiteley, told "in his own words" using personal letters, notebooks and photographs, interwoven with reconstructions, animations, archival interviews and rare footage.



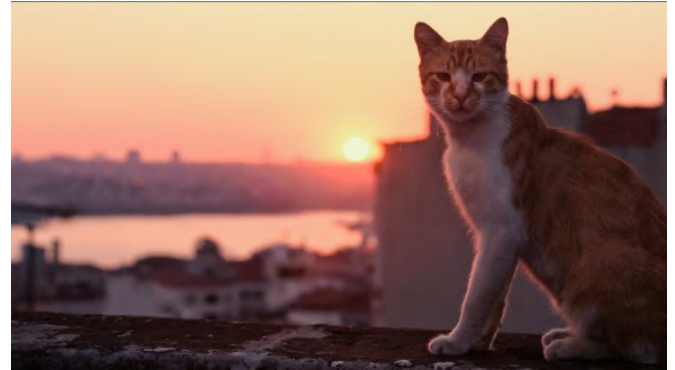
A comprehensive cinematic chronicle of the extraordinary life, times and art of the late Australian painter Brett Whiteley is long overdue. This exemplary documentary makes the wait worthwhile. Director James Bogle does a terrific job illustrating his life and the impact of his work, providing a glimpse into how far ahead of his time Whiteley really was.

Compiled by Alex

Kedi

Calling all cat lovers – you cannot miss Kedi! This delightful film will also appeal to those who love Turkey, and travel, and skilful documentary filmmaking. It is a labour-of-love portrait of the cats who roam the streets of Istanbul, supported and adored by the city's citizens. Turkish director Ceyda Torun and her cinematographer husband spent months following and filming seven of the city's famed street cats, each of whom displays a distinctly individual character. As the Herald Sun describes: "This captivating documentary casts a

serenely powerful spell as it explores the extraordinary bond shared between the Turkish city's omnipresent four-pawed nomads and the humans who look after them."



Empire Magazine says that the film not only delivers charming "feline footage" but "deftly goes beyond that and offers eloquent insights into the modern city, animals, humans and the relationship between all three;" while the Irish Times described Kedi as "A purrfect antidote to blockbuster fatigue." An absolute charmer. Compiled by Liz

Quiet Passion

The story of American poet Emily Dickinson from her early days as a young schoolgirl to her later years as a reclusive, unrecognized artist. This is subtle biopic, which follows Dickinson from her childhood to her death. The poems are read by a voice-over, which is not the easiest way to appreciate poetry. But at the same time, the poems are a necessary element to understand Dickinson as she was.



British director Terence Davies shows Dickinson as a person who refused to stick to the strict rules of life in the Victorian era. She had a mind of her

own, and was not afraid to speak out. At the same time, she seemed to have trouble finding happiness. The most tragic element of her life was that her poetry was hardly appreciated. Only a few poems were published in the local paper.

There is some of witty dialogue in the early stages of the film, that proves that condescending New York intellectuals existed before Woody Allen came along.

Compiled by Neil

Hounds of Love

This harrowing feature film debut by Perth writer/director Ben Young was described by The Guardian as “the scariest film of the year,” and by David Stratton in The Australian as “a little masterpiece of horror.”



The film is loosely inspired by events involving David and Catherine Birnie, who kidnapped and murdered four young women in Perth during the 1980s. It tells the story of a married couple who commit a series of tortures and murders, whose new victim realises that she must create tension between them in order to save her own life. Star Stephen Curry – best known for his comedy roles, particularly as Dale Kerrigan in The Castle – gives an acclaimed performance astonishingly against type, described by Variety magazine as “redolent of pure evil.” The performances of Emma Booth as his wife and Ashleigh Cummings as the young captive have also been widely praised, with the Los Angeles Times describes the film as featuring a “trio of ferocious performances at its centre.”

While discomfiting in the extreme, ‘Hounds of Love’ is an exceptionally intense and cleverly made film which has received significant praise

overseas and screened at the Venice and Tribeca Film Festivals. It heralds the arrival of an important Australian film-making talent. Compiled by Liz

The Innocents

Warsaw, December 1945: the second World War is finally over and Mathilde is treating the last of the French survivors of the German camps. When a panicked Benedictine nun appears at the clinic one night begging Mathilde to follow her back to the convent, what she finds there is shocking: a holy sister about to give birth and several more in advanced stages of pregnancy.



César-nominated French star Lou de Laâge plays Mathilde Beaulieu in this powerful film inspired by a true story. Veteran French director Anne Fontaine approaches a spiritually and emotionally complex real-life slice of history with deftness and understated drama. Shot in artful, quiet light "The Innocents" is beautifully performed by its nearly all-female cast, who embody a story in which hope and horror are commingled to quietly moving effect. Compiled by Alex

Dance Academy

This big screen adaptation of the award winning Australian tv show doesn't disappoint, picking up the main members of the original cast 18 months after their graduation from the national ballet's dance school. Xenia Goodwin stars as former ballet student Tara Webster, who was destined to become one of the top dancers of her generation before a devastating injury crippled her career. Over the last eighteen months she has tried to embrace life as a university student but cannot get over her dream of dancing professionally. In her quest to defy the odds in a

near impossible comeback, Tara leaves her life and love behind in Sydney and travels to New York.



Oz acting greats Julia Blake and Tara Morice, star of the iconic 1992 dance pic *Strictly Ballroom*, feature in supporting roles, alongside Miranda Otto, who plays ice-queen Madeline Moncure, the ballet company's artistic director. While maintaining the heart that helped make it a small-screen hit, *Dance Academy* looks every bit the sumptuous big-screen drama. Compiled by Alex

Sense of an Ending

This film is a of the 2011 Booker prize winning novel by famed British author Julian Barnes with its Proustian meditation on memory.



We all reminisce. Older people have more to mull over than their younger counterparts, but we all do it. To what extent are our memories accurate representations of what actually happened? And how do the things that we forget, choose to leave out or just misremember affect how we view our past – and our present? These are the kind of

questions this film so eloquently and engagingly poses.

Dr Webster receives a letter informing him that he has been bequeathed an old diary by the recently departed mother of his college girlfriend. Questions abound. Tony wants to know whose diary it is. When he tells his ex-wife about the letter, she's curious why the mother of a long-lost love would be leaving him anything in her will. As Tony struggles with the family's lawyer to get his hands on the diary (or at least get some answers), he begins telling Margaret stories from a past that he has never before shared. She gets frustrated when she senses that he isn't telling her the whole story, while the audience is left to wonder what he's leaving out, why he's leaving things out and if he even realizes he's doing it.

Compiled by Neil

I Am Not Your Negro

In his essay "Stranger in the Village," James Baldwin (1924-1987), the iconic American essayist, playwright and novelist wrote: *people are trapped in history and history is trapped in them.*

The documentary *I Am Not Your Negro* explores this disturbing history of African-American racial and social identity in the United States. Based on Baldwin's unfinished manuscript "Remember this House", it follows the legacies of his three closest friends, Medgar Evers, Malcom X and Martin Luther King - their roles in history and influence on his own thinking.



The film is directed by Raoul Peck and narrated by Samuel L. Jackson, directly from Baldwin's writing. It features an impressive compilation of archival and

modern footage, and has an impressive 98% on Rotten Tomatoes!

"I Am Not Your Negro" goes beyond the limitations of a historical rumination, fusing past and present into a fascinating statement on national identity. "The story of the negro in America is the story of America," Baldwin states, and Peck proves it, with a nonlinear approach that pairs pivotal moments with fictional representations to show how even the absence of black identity in popular culture invokes its struggles. (Eric Kohn, IndieWire)

Compiled by Laura

Ali's Wedding

"Ever since I was a kid I got introduced as Doctor Ali this and Surgeon Ali that, I didn't have the guts to tell them I was moron Ali!"



As the son of a respected Muslim cleric, the young adult Ali has big shoes to fill. But under the expectations of his beloved family to study medicine and marry a young woman from the local Mosque, Ali finds himself at odds with the person he wants to be. To hide the shame of failing to get into medical school, Ali begins to tell one small lie after another, ultimately spiraling into a small scale identity crisis. His efforts to please everyone, while at the same time following his dreams and chasing his true love interest - the intelligent Lebanese-Australian Dianne (Helena Sawires) - make for a light, coming of age romantic comedy.

The film is based on the true story of Osamah Sami, who co-wrote the script with Andrew Knight (*Hacksaw Ridge*, *Rake*, *Jack Irish*) and also plays Ali. Touted as Australia's "first Muslim rom-com" (*Sydney Morning Herald*), *Ali's Wedding* is a feel good story about family, love, and what it means to find success.

Compiled by Laura

Get Out

One of the hottest films of 2017, this breakaway smash hit is the directorial and screenwriting debut of Jordan Peele, previously best known for his appearances in the Comedy Central sketch series Key & Peele.



Chris, a 20-something African-American, is invited by his white girlfriend to spend the weekend at her wealthy family's upstate property. Greeted with cloying friendliness by her parents, Chris soon develops an uneasy suspicion that all on the luxurious estate is not what it seems.

While sometimes described as a horror film, moviegoers who are not horror fans should not be put off, as *Get Out* uses the genre for satirical purposes, driving home points about race relations with an appropriately savage sense of humour. As described by *The Times*: "in a double whammy of satire, *Get Out* upends all the expected tropes of the horror movie and gives middle-class white liberals a thorough skewering". *TIME Magazine* described the film as "an agile entertainment whose social and cultural observations are woven so tightly into the fabric that you're laughing even as you're thinking, and vice-versa." Included in a myriad of lists of 'the best films of 2017 so far' (*Variety*, *The LA Times*, *The Telegraph (UK)*, *SBS Movies*, *Esquire*, *USA Today*, *Rolling Stone* and *The Guardian*, just for starters), *Get Out* is a clear-cut 'must see' film for this year. Compiled by Liz

Your Name (Kimi No Na Wa)

Astonishingly, 2016 film *Your Name* has overtaken *Spirited Away* to become the highest grossing anime feature film in history, as well as China's highest grossing film of all time. A bona fide box office phenomenon, it is essential viewing not only for anime fans, but for film-lovers in general.

Directed by Makoto Shinkai (who created *Voices of a Distant Star* and *5 Centimeters Per Second*), it tells the story of two high schoolers, a boy called Taki and a girl called Mitsuha, whose lives are unconnected until they suddenly wake up in each other's bodies. They continue to swap bodies, and start trying to communicate by leaving notes for one another. Then they decide to try and meet.



Gorgeously animated, the film is much more than a teen romance, exploring ideas about love, loss, time and destiny. The *New York Times* describes it as, "thoroughly charming and gently comic"; while the *San Francisco Chronicle* calls it "exquisite, beautiful and wise." Its theme song, 'Zen Zen Zense', has also become a major hit in Japanese karaoke clubs – perhaps Darwin is next?!?

Compiled by Liz

The Viceroy's House

The last colonial Viceroy of India, Lord Mountbatten has the responsibility of overseeing the transition of British India to independence, but meets with conflict as different sides clash in the face of monumental change, as the country is partitioned and Pakistan is born.



This is the background story to the catastrophe of India's cruel partition, the 1947 scar on humanity that remains an open wound today. From that historic perspective alone, Gurinder Chadha's

Viceroy's House is a potent film that takes us inside the era (the house alone is an amazing place). Within the wider story is the intimate story of two lovers who hardly have time to bind their hearts together before being ripped apart by the history in which they are unwilling participants. With million deaths and Fourteen million were displaced.

The **Upstairs-Downstairs** reality is beautifully woven into the viceregal household: watching some of the 500 immaculately clothed staff preparing for the arrival of Lord Mountbatten and his wife Edwina is a visual highlight. (These scenes were shot at the real Viceroy's House - now Rashtrapati Bhawan, the residence of India's President.) As the countdown to the transfer of power and the exodus begins, watch for the telling scene in which the silver cutlery is divided into labelled sections: Sikhs and Muslims. It's a poignant moment - amid looting and mob violence.

Aquarius

Clara, wonderfully played by [Sônia Braga](#), is a retired music critic . The passionate devotion to music in her newspaper columns has made her well known, and her trenchant opinions have made her a force to be reckoned with. She has the respectful title of "Dona Clara", a widow with grownup children with kids of their own.: Braga gives her a shrewdly judged mixture of vulnerability and hauteur. She lives in the Brazilian seaside town of Recife, where she has celebrity status, and the local equivalent of national-treasure prestige. Clara is devoted to her flat in the small apartment building called Aquarius.



She inherited it from her adored Aunt Lucia, a dissident, romantic intellectual and resistance veteran of Brazil's era of military rule, to whom we are introduced in the opening flashback sequence. It is Lucia's style she has clearly followed. But then the building's freehold is sold to a hard-faced property company which wants to bulldoze it and put up a glitzy, lucrative block on this prime

beachfront site. Every other tenant has sold up. But tough-minded Clara refuses the developers' blandishments and veiled threats.

Sonia Braga delivers one of the best performances of her career in this exceptional story full of human warmth about people, memories and their intimate relationship with places/objects, exploring our sense of moral violation when we feel invaded in our own home. Carlos Magalhaes.

Compiled by Di

After the Storm

Hard boiled Family comedy/drama with a soft Heart – Wendy Ide the Guardian

[Hirokazu Kore-eda](#) has drawn comparisons to [Yasujiro Ozu](#) in the way he's not as interested in major plot twists or set pieces as he is subtle human emotion, typically hinging on family dynamics. In films like "[Nobody Knows](#)," "Our Little Sister", he turns the camera into a window. We look through it and see people a lot like us on the other side, but that empathy never comes through manipulation or cliché. With his latest, the remarkably moving "After the Storm," he again finds truth and drama in relatable human behavior, and does so by sketching fully-realized, three-dimensional characters. "After the Storm" is about a man unable to live in the present. Roger Ebert



No modern filmmaker has as sure a grasp on family dynamics as Hirokazu Kore-eda. Watching the Japanese master's recent films – is as emotional as leafing through an old photo album. The ornaments, rituals and dinner ingredients may be unfamiliar, but the joys, fears, hopes, conflicts, in-jokes, doubts, misgivings, understandings and moments of clarity are totally relatable. As the title implies, a typhoon passes through, and the family weathers it. But Kore-eda's insight is so unflinching, his affection for his characters so

intimate and sure, that not a moment here feels wasted. Tom Huddleston

Compiled by Di