



vevo

THE 'FUCK IT!' PRINCIPLE

PSYCHOACTIVE DRUG USE IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH FILM AND TELEVISION

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British Popular Culture conference: Thursday 9th July 2026

MATTHEW ROGERS

SENIOR LECTURER - FILM AND TELEVISION

- This paper builds on my BPC paper from 2025 🙌🙌
- I'm hoping that this paper has slightly less unsubstantiated conjecture 🙌
- Transdisciplinarity is at my core as an academic 🤔
- I'm less worried about future dissertation students hearing what I have to say - but I still wouldn't advise them to follow my methodology 🤔
- I.E. Buckle up...! 🌀
- Please please please feel free to point out any potential flaws in my campaign 🙌





A NETFLIX
ORIGINAL
DOCUMENTARY
SHORT

100 AMERICANS DIE EVERY DAY FROM OVERDOSE.

MOTHERS
FATHERS
DAUGHTERS
S O N S
A U N T S
U N C L E S
C O U S I N S
N I E C E S
N E P H E W S
GRANDPARENTS
GRANDCHILDREN
CO-WORKERS
FRIENDS
NEIGHBORS
**THREE WOMEN
FIGHT**
TO BREAK THE CYCLE

ONE LIFE AT A TIME.

HEROIN(E)

SEPT 12 | NETFLIX

DOCUMENTARY

A NETFLIX ORIGINAL DOCUMENTARY



**Glass
is
Greener**

4.20 | NETFLIX



STONER CINEMA





INSPIRED BY TRUE EVENTS

COCAINE

BEAR

GET IN LINE
FEBRUARY 24

R

**COCAINE
CINEMA**

ONLY IN CINEMAS MARCH 7
GET ON IT

A Stanley Kubrick Production "A CLOCKWORK ORANGE" Starring Malcolm McDowell • Patrick Magee • Adrienne Cori
and Miriam Karlin • Screenplay by Stanley Kubrick • Based on the novel by Anthony Burgess • Produced and
Directed by Stanley Kubrick • Executive Producers Max L. Raab and Si Lvinoff • From Warner Bros., A Kinney Company

R **RESTING**
Under 17 requires accompanying
Parent or Adult Guardian

**FICTIONAL DRUG
CINEMA**



Based on a true story

WINONA RYDER ANGELINA JOLIE

GIRL, INTERRUPTED

Sometimes
the only
way to
stay sane
is to go
a little crazy

COLUMBIA PICTURES PRESENTS
A DOUGLAS WICK PRODUCTION
A FILM BY JAMES MANGOLD
Starring WINONA RYDER "GIRL, INTERRUPTED"
ANGELINA JOLIE CLEA DUNALL BRITTONY KATHRYN
ELISABETH MOSS JARED LETO JEFFREY BRIDGES WENDY MCGARRETT
AND WINOPI GOLDBERG WITH GEORGIA CAMERON MICHAEL DUNN
JOHN ADRIAN PHILLIPS JAKEVIN TOST "MINDGAMES" KEVIN
JANDRA JACK GREEN, AKA "JANDRA" BOONE WINONA RYDER
© 2000 JAMES MANGOLD AND USA LOOMER AND ANNA JAMMOTON PICTURES
WWW.DOUGLAS WICK - CATHY KONRAD WWW.JAMES MANGOLD
www.sony.com/girlinterrupted

MEDICINAL DRUG CINEMA

KEVIN SPACEY

JEFF BRIDGES



K-PAX

CHANGE THE WAY YOU LOOK AT THE WORLD

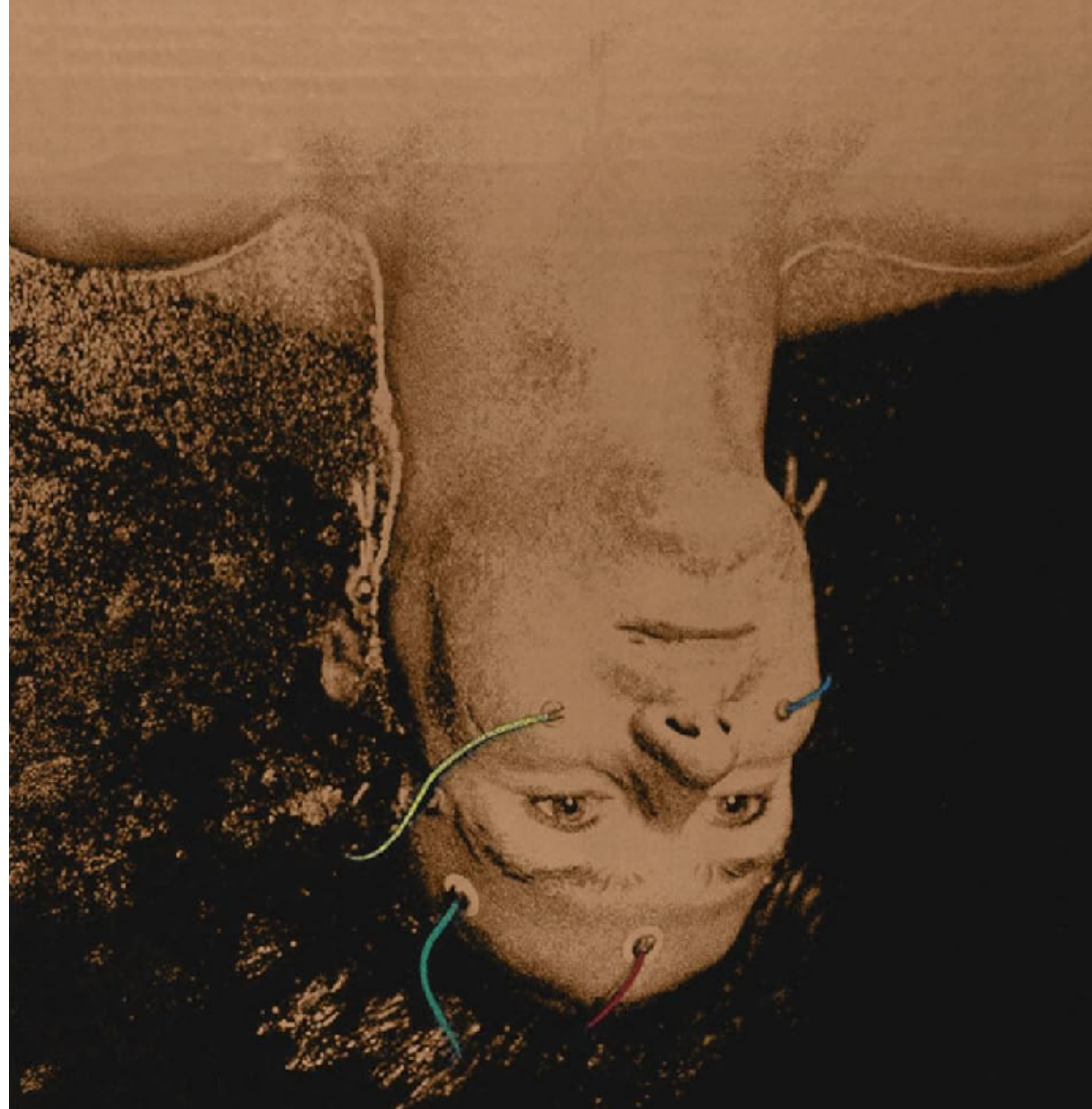
UNIVERSAL PICTURES AND INTERMEDIA FILMS PRESENT A LAWRENCE GORDON PRODUCTION AN IAN SUTLEY FILM KEVIN SPACEY JEFF BRIDGES "K-PAX" ALFIE WOODWARD
MARY MCCORMACK CASTING BY DEBRA ZANE USA CO-PRODUCED BY MICHAEL LEVY EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS SUSAN G. POLLOCK COSTUME DESIGNER LOUISE MINGENBACH MUSIC BY EDWARD SHEARMAN AND STUART CRAIG MCKAY AGE
PRODUCTION DESIGNER JOHN BEARD EDITOR JOHN MATHIESON EXECUTIVE PRODUCER GENE BREWER SCREENPLAY BY CHARLES LEVITT PRODUCED BY LAWRENCE GORDON LLOYD LEVIN ROBERT E. COLESBERG
LAWRENCE GORDON INTERMEDIA PARENTS STRONGLY CAUTIONED SOME MATERIAL MAY BE INAPPROPRIATE FOR CHILDREN UNDER 17
"K-PAX" IS A REGISTERED TRADEMARK OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES
A UNIVERSAL PICTURE UNIVERSAL
For more trailers, go to www.k-pax.com

RALPH FIENNES JACK O'CONNELL ALFIE WILLIAMS



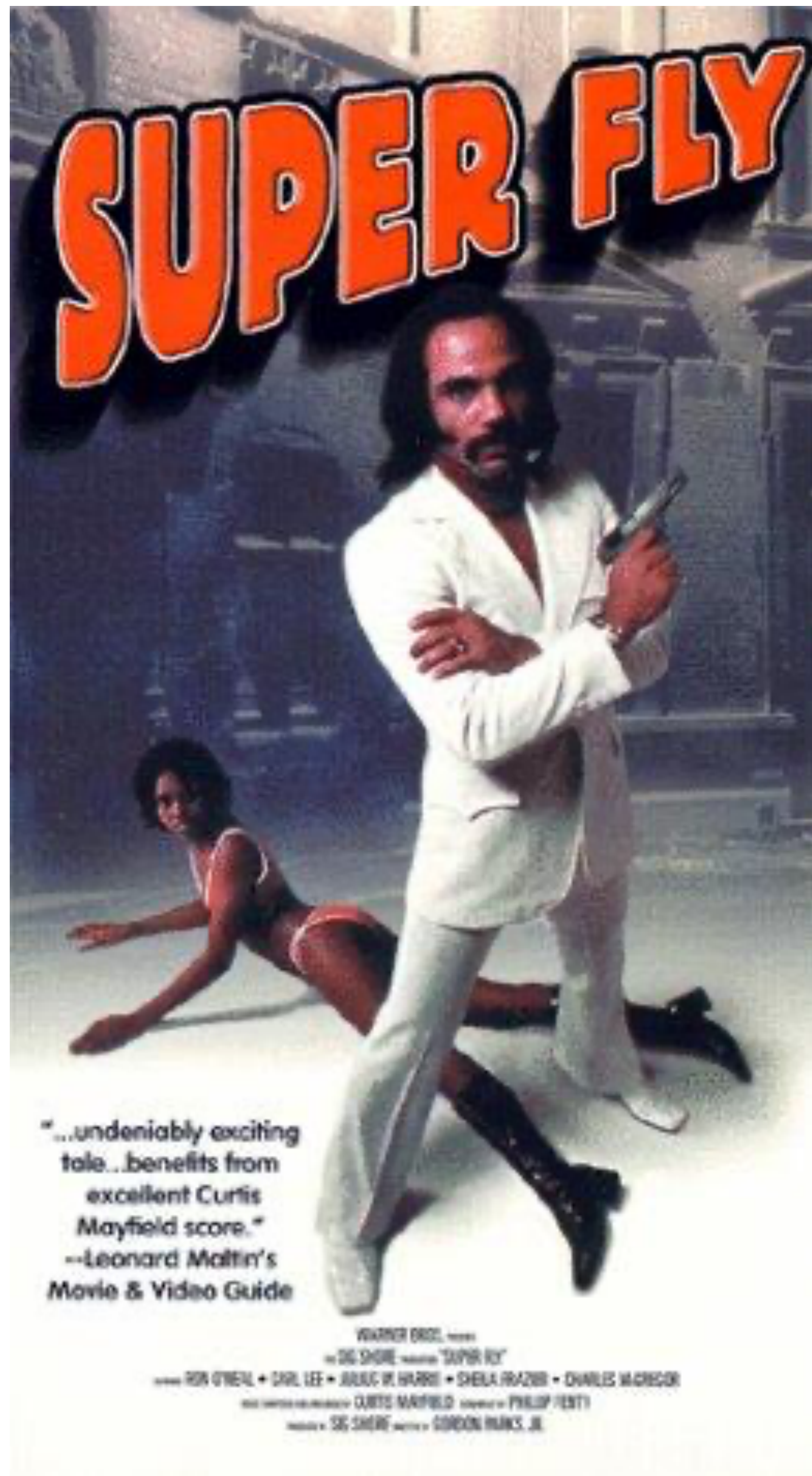
SCI-FI HORROR

In the basement of a university medical school Dr. Jessup floats naked in total darkness. The most terrifying experiment in the history of science is out of control...and the subject is himself.



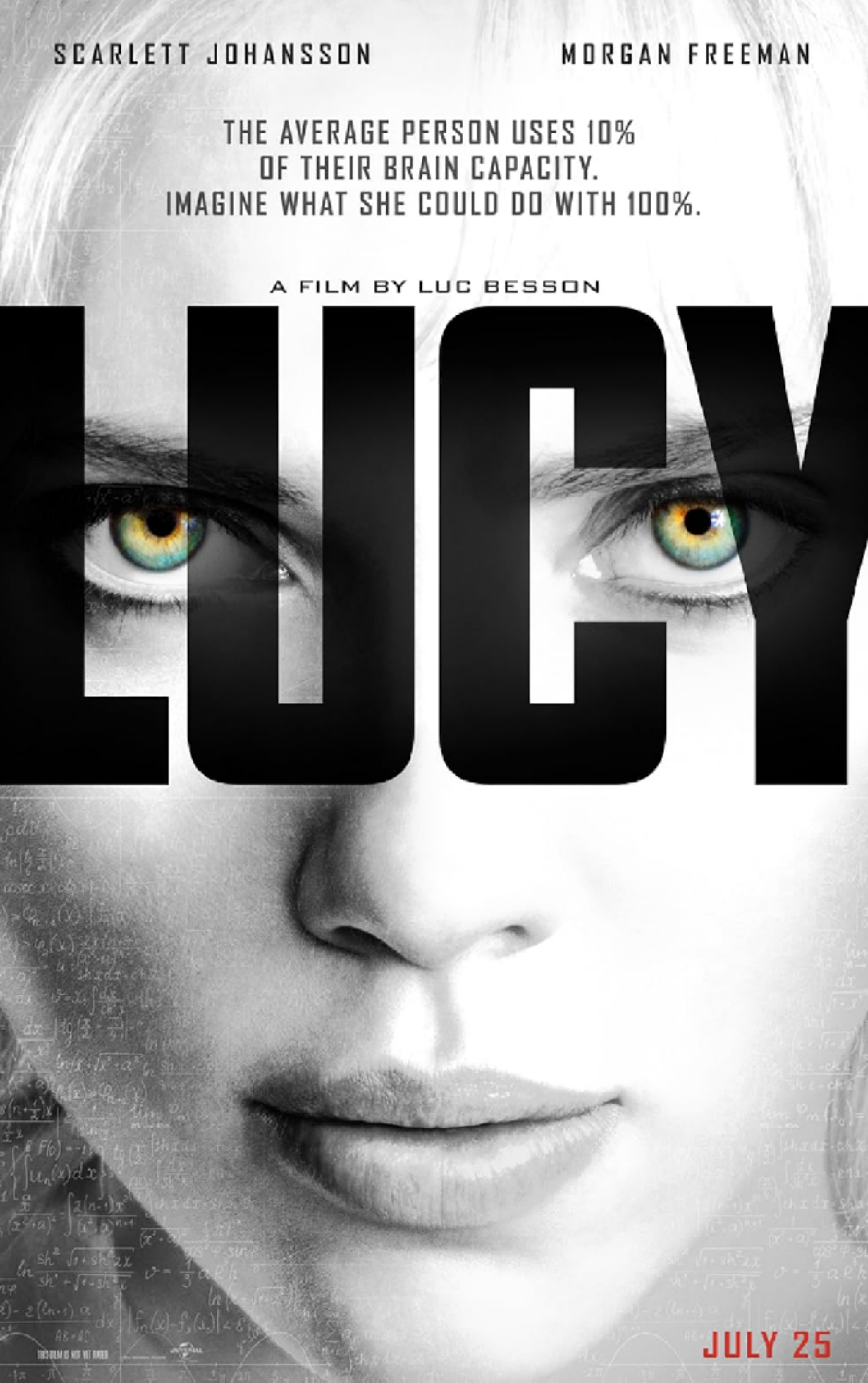
ALTERED STATES

'ALTERED STATES' STARRING WILLIAM HURT · BLAIR BROWN · BOB BALABAN · CHARLES HALL
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER DANIEL MELNICK · MUSIC BY JOHN CORIGLIANO · WRITTEN FOR THE SCREEN BY SIDNEY AARON · FROM THE NOVEL 'ALTERED STATES' BY PADDY CHAYEFSKY
PRODUCED BY HOWARD GOTTFRIED · DIRECTED BY KEN RUSSELL
DISTRIBUTED BY WARNER BROS. A WARNER COMMUNICATIONS COMPANY
©1980 Warner Bros. All Rights Reserved



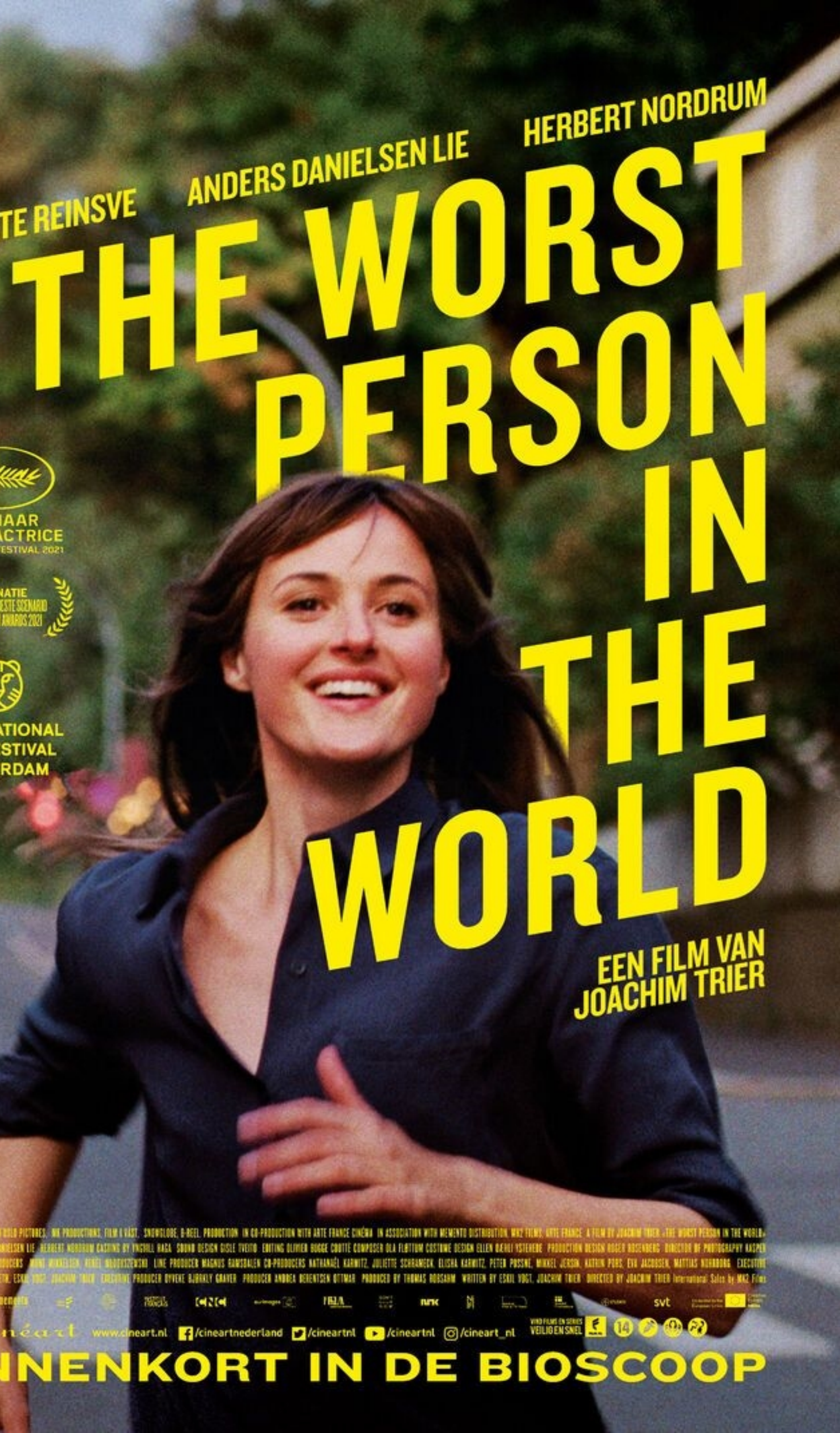
BLAXPLOITATION



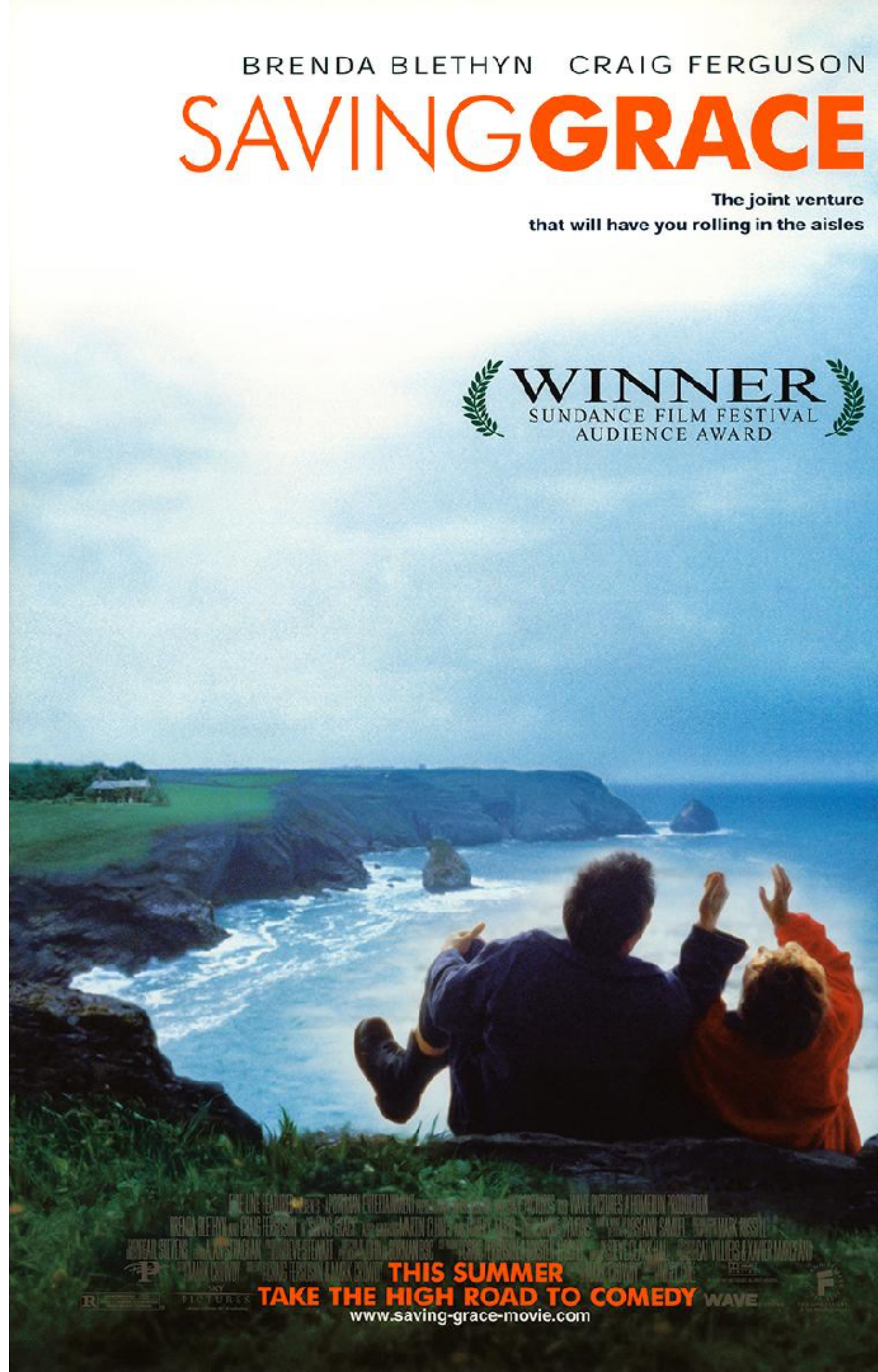


SCI-FI SUPERHERO





ROMANTIC COMEDIES



*Times like these
call for a
Big Lebowski.*



THE
BIG LEBOWSKI
FROM THE CREATORS OF "FARGO"

[illegible]

www.lebowski.com

CONTRACT VALUES



ALLSTATE

GRANT RCT

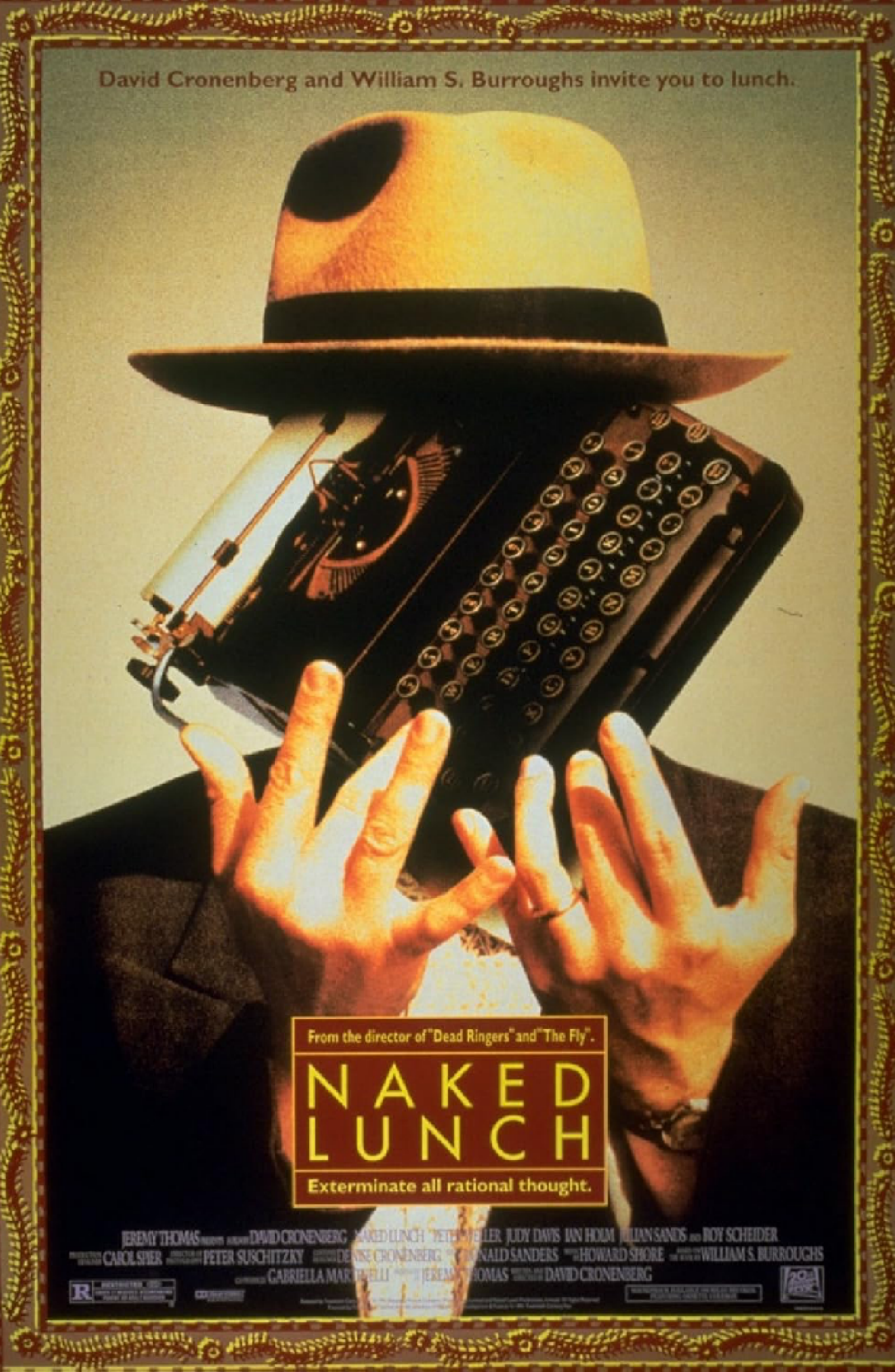
COMEDIES

PARAMOUNT PICTURES PRESENTS A HOWARD W. KOCH PRODUCTION AIRPLANE!
STARRING ROBERT HAYS & JULIE HAGERTY EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JIM ABRAHAMS DAVID ZUCKER JERRY ZUCKER
PRODUCED BY JON DAVISON WRITTEN FOR THE SCREEN & DIRECTED BY JIM ABRAHAMS DAVID ZUCKER JERRY ZUCKER LENSES AND PANAFLEX CAMERA BY PANAVISION
A PARAMOUNT PICTURE

PG PARENTAL GUIDANCE SUGGESTED
SOME MATERIAL MAY BE INAPPROPRIATE FOR CHILDREN

COPYRIGHT © 1980 BY PARAMOUNT PICTURES CORPORATION. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.



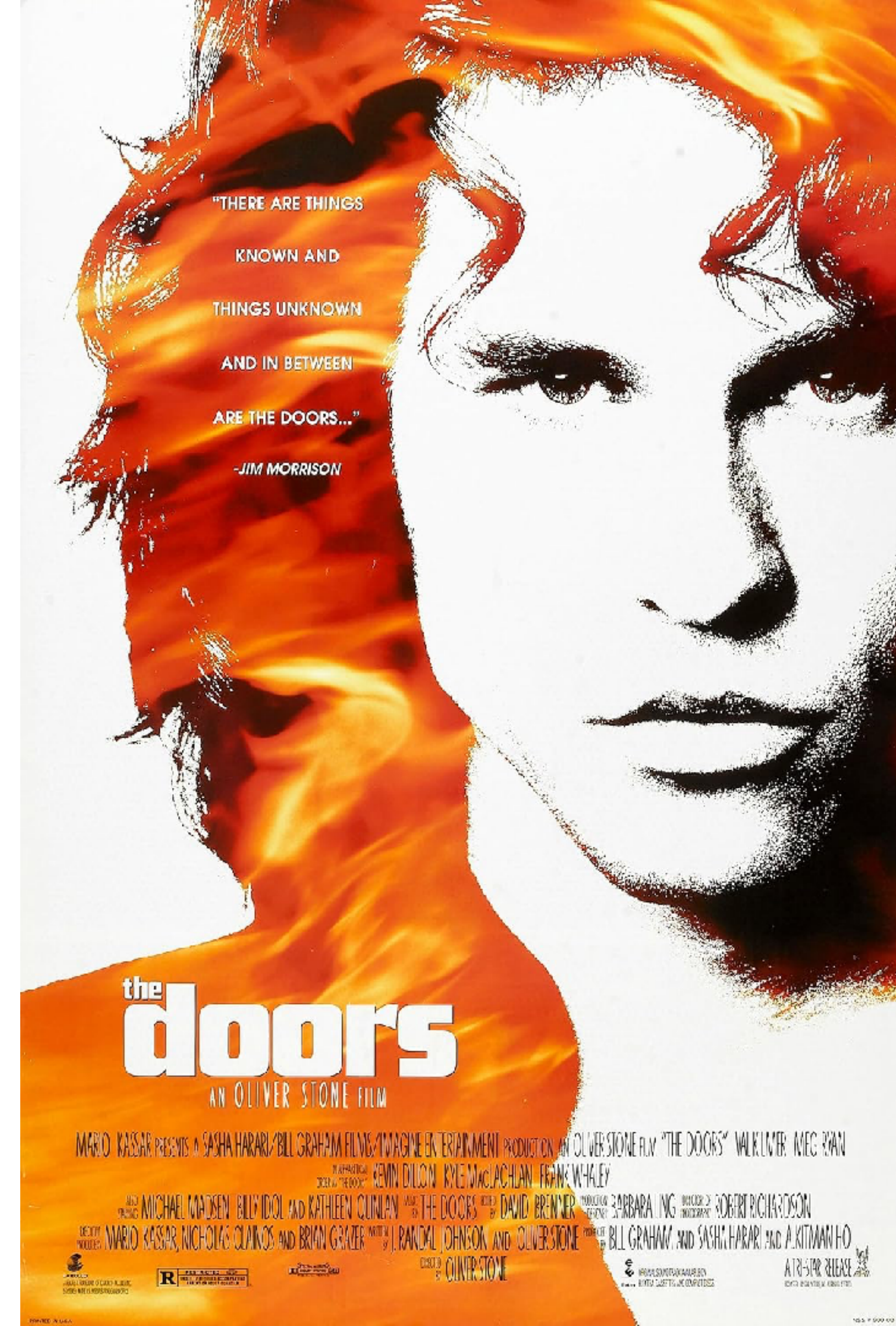


ADAPTATIONS

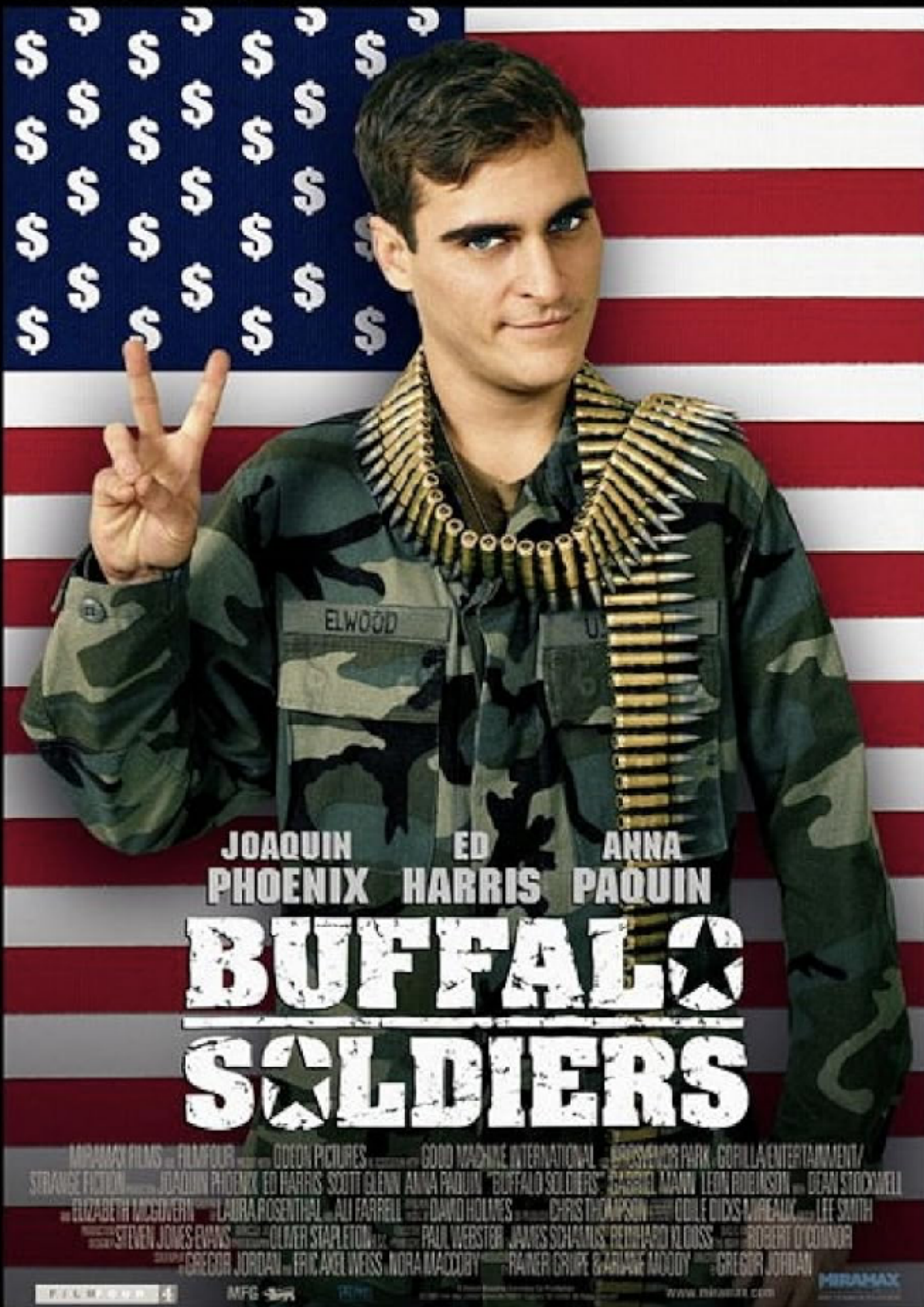




BIOPICS

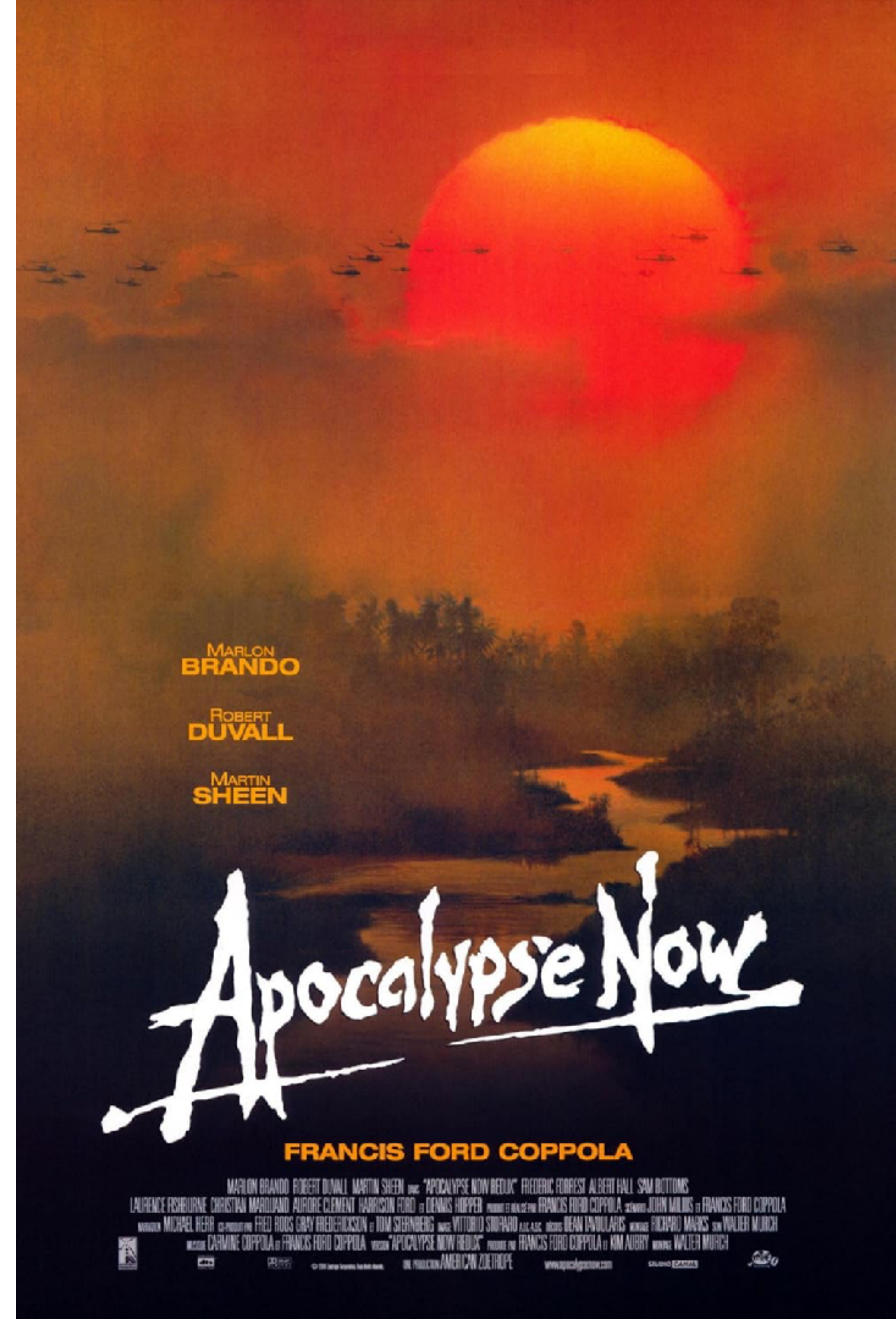


STEAL ALL THAT YOU CAN STEAL



A STORY SO OUTRAGEOUS YOU COULDN'T MAKE IT UP

WAR FILMS



MARLON BRANDO

ROBERT DUVALL

MARTIN SHEEN

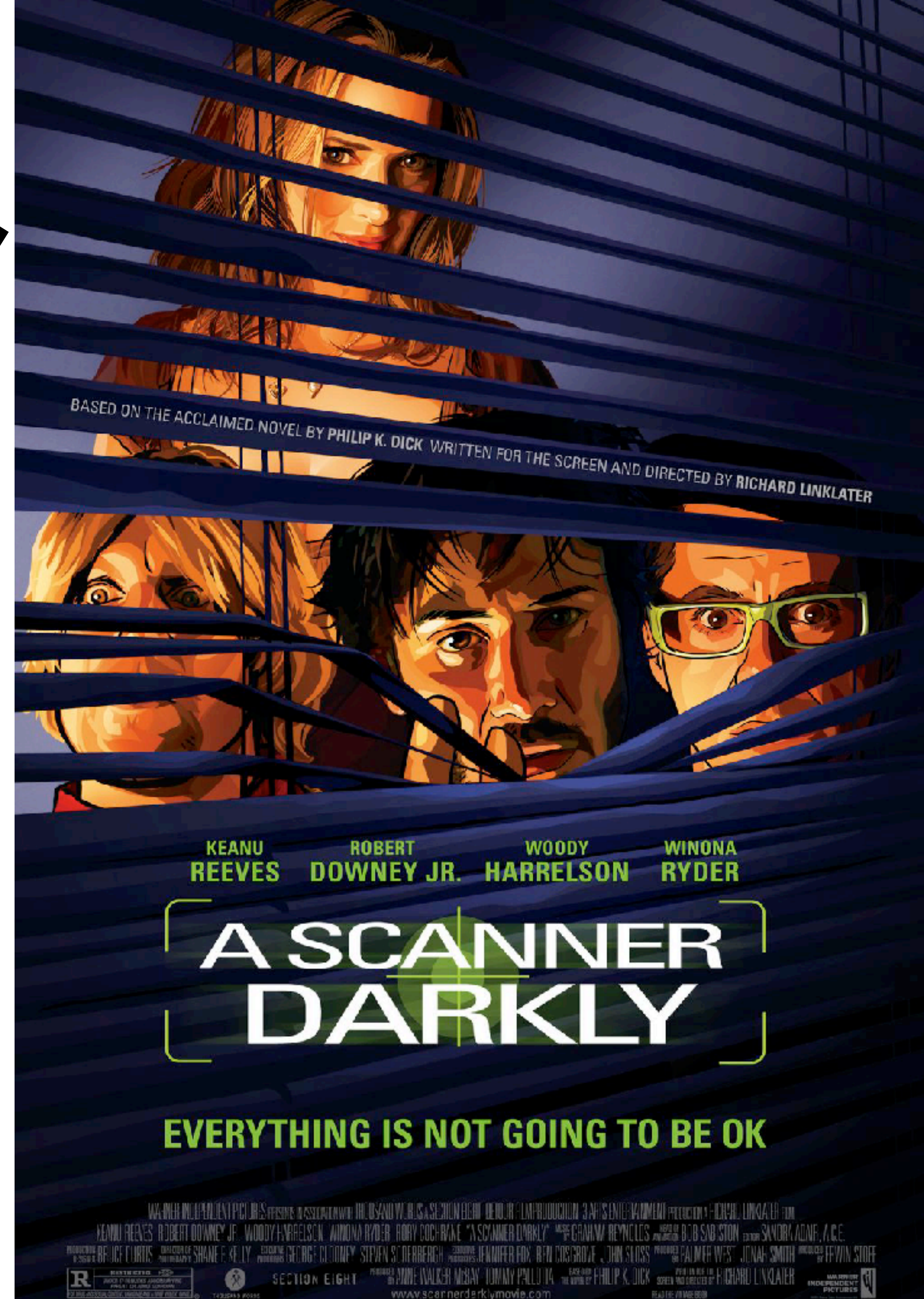
Apocalypse Now

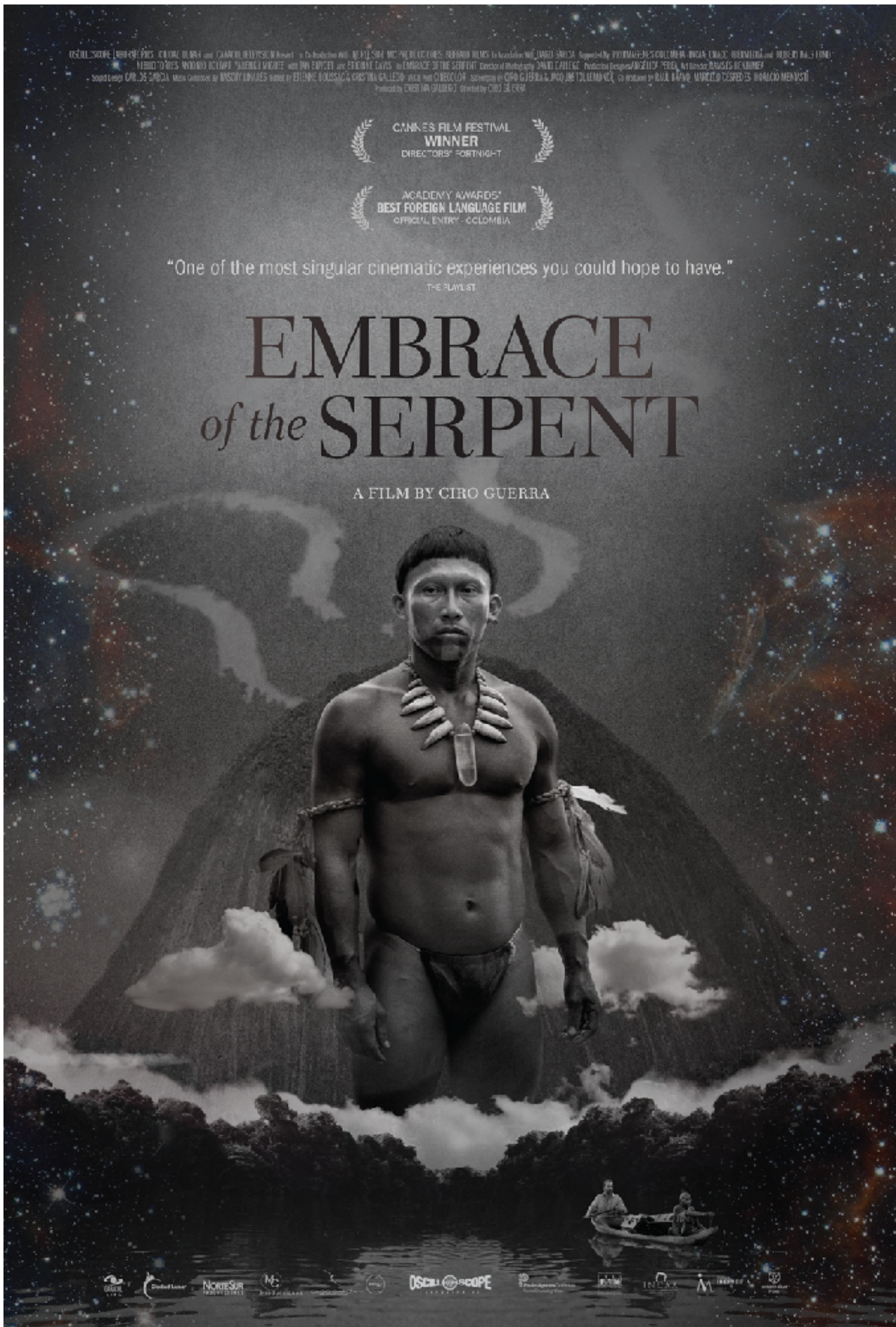
FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA

MARLON BRANDO ROBERT DUVALL MARTIN SHEEN "APOCALYPSE NOW REDUX" FREDERIC FORREST ALBERT HALL SAM BOTTOMS
LAURENCE FISHBURNE CHRISTIAN MAROLAND AUDREY CLEMENT HARRISON FORD DENNIS HOPPER PRODUCED BY FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA
DIRECTED BY FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA
CASTING BY JOHN MINKS
COSTUME DESIGNER FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA
EDITED BY JOHN MINKS
PRODUCTION DESIGNER JOHN MINKS
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JOHN MINKS FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA
PRODUCED BY FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA
SCREENPLAY BY FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA
DIALOGUE BY FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA
MUSIC BY WALTER MURCH
COPPOLA FILMS
© 1979 AMERICAN ZOETROPE
www.apocalypsenow.com



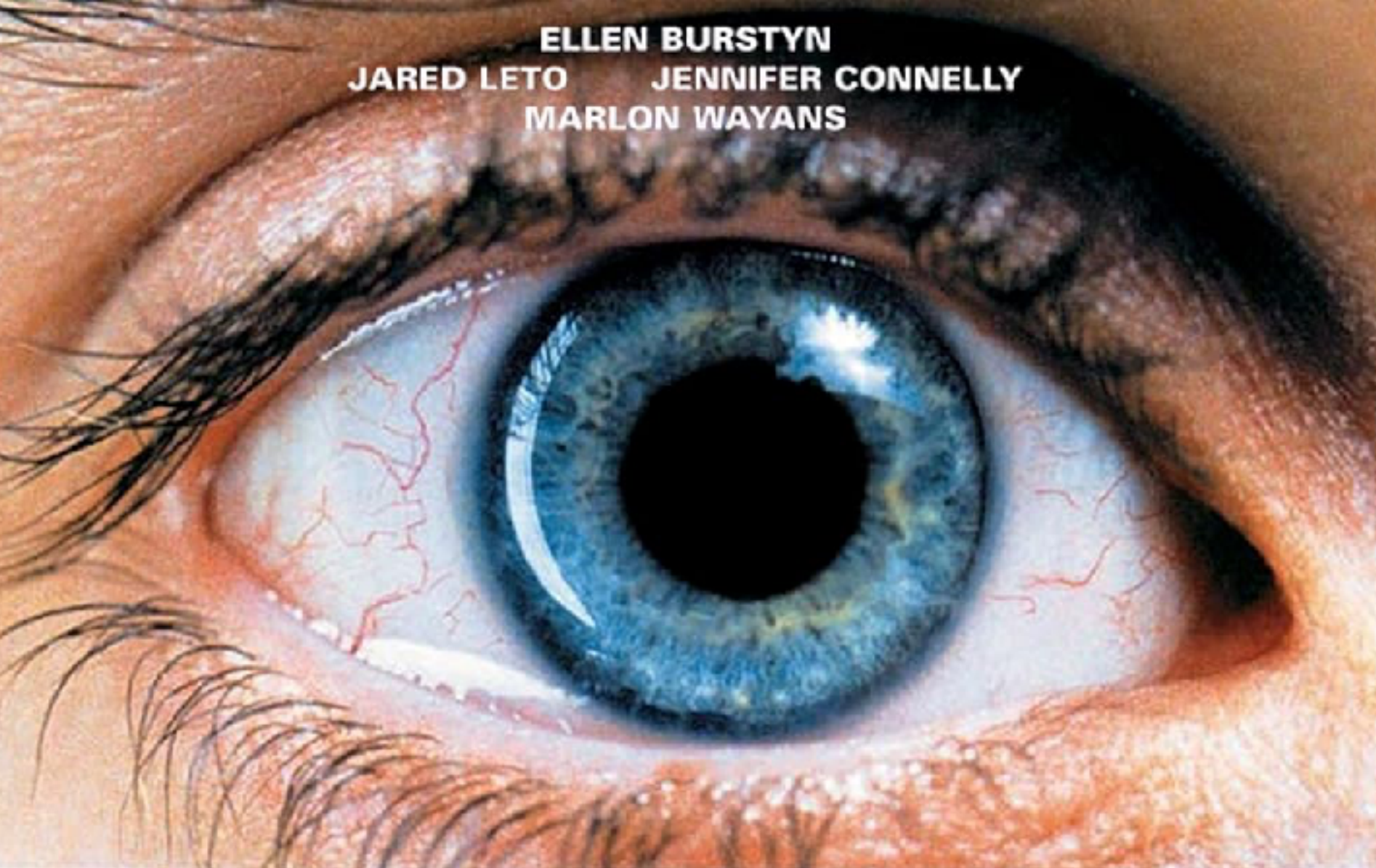
POLICE/CRIME FILMS





WORLD CINEMA





ELLEN BURSTYN
JARED LETO JENNIFER CONNELLY
MARLON WAYANS

A FILM BY DARREN ARONOFSKY

REQUIEM FOR A DREAM



ARTISAN ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS A THOUSAND MILES AWAY FROM THE HEART OF THE MATTER...
JAMES LARROCK'S "REQUIEM FOR A DREAM" ELLEN BURSTYN JARED LETO JENNIFER CONNELLY MARLON WAYANS
MUSIC BY WAX MUSICIAN HEAD OF THE FISHBONE SQUADRON PRODUCED BY BEN BARKERHILLZ WRITTEN BY HARRY SHAPIRO JOHN SMITH SCOTT FROEL SCOTT FRANKLIN AND RALPH ANDERSON STYLING BY JANE MARSHALL
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY JAMES CAMERON EDITOR JANE MARSHALL EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JAMES CAMERON JANE MARSHALL PRODUCED BY JANE MARSHALL
www.requiemfordream.com
ARTISAN ENTERTAINMENT

US DRAMA

A man went looking for America.
And couldn't find it anywhere...



PANDO COMPANY in association with
RAYBERT PRODUCTIONS presents

easy rider

starring

PETER FONDA · DENNIS HOPPER · JACK NICHOLSON

Written by

PETER FONDA

Directed by

DENNIS HOPPER

Produced by

PETER FONDA

Associate Producer

WILLIAM HAYWARD

Executive Producer

BERT SCHNEIDER · COLOR

DENNIS HOPPER
TERRY SOUTHERN



Released by COLUMBIA PICTURES

**“Choose life. Choose a job.
Choose a starter home. Choose dental insurance,
leisure wear and matching luggage. Choose your future.
But why would anyone want to do a thing like that?”**



Trainspotting

Britain's smash hit is coming to America.

A MIRAMAX FILMS RELEASE CHANNEL FOUR FILMS PRESENTS A FIGMENT FILM IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE NOEL GAY MOTION PICTURE COMPANY "TRAINSPOTTING"
EWAN MCGREGOR EWEN BRENNER JOHNNY LEE MILLER KEVIN MCKIDNEY ROBERT CARVERLE AS BEGGIE INTRODUCING KELLY MACDONALD CASTING RACHAEL FLEMING PRODUCTION DESIGNER KATHIE QUINN
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS MASAMUNE HIRAKAWA PRODUCED BY BRIAN TUFANO, B.S.C. WRITTEN BY PIRVINE WELSH DIRECTED BY JOHN HOOGE PRODUCED BY ANDREW MACDONALD EDITED BY MAUNY BOYLE
LIVE! MUSIC! READ THE MIRAMAX AND W.N. VORON RECORDS #SEE THE MIRAMAX CAFE on the web at <http://www.miramax.com> MIRAMAX
SOUNDTRACK AVAILABLE ON CAPITOL RECORDS

BRITISH DRAMA

No Rules. No Limits. And No Saying "No"...Ever!

**"The Year's
Hottest Movie!"**
—The Observer

**"A Hypnotic
Side-Splitting
Delight!"**
—The Daily Telegraph



Human Traffic

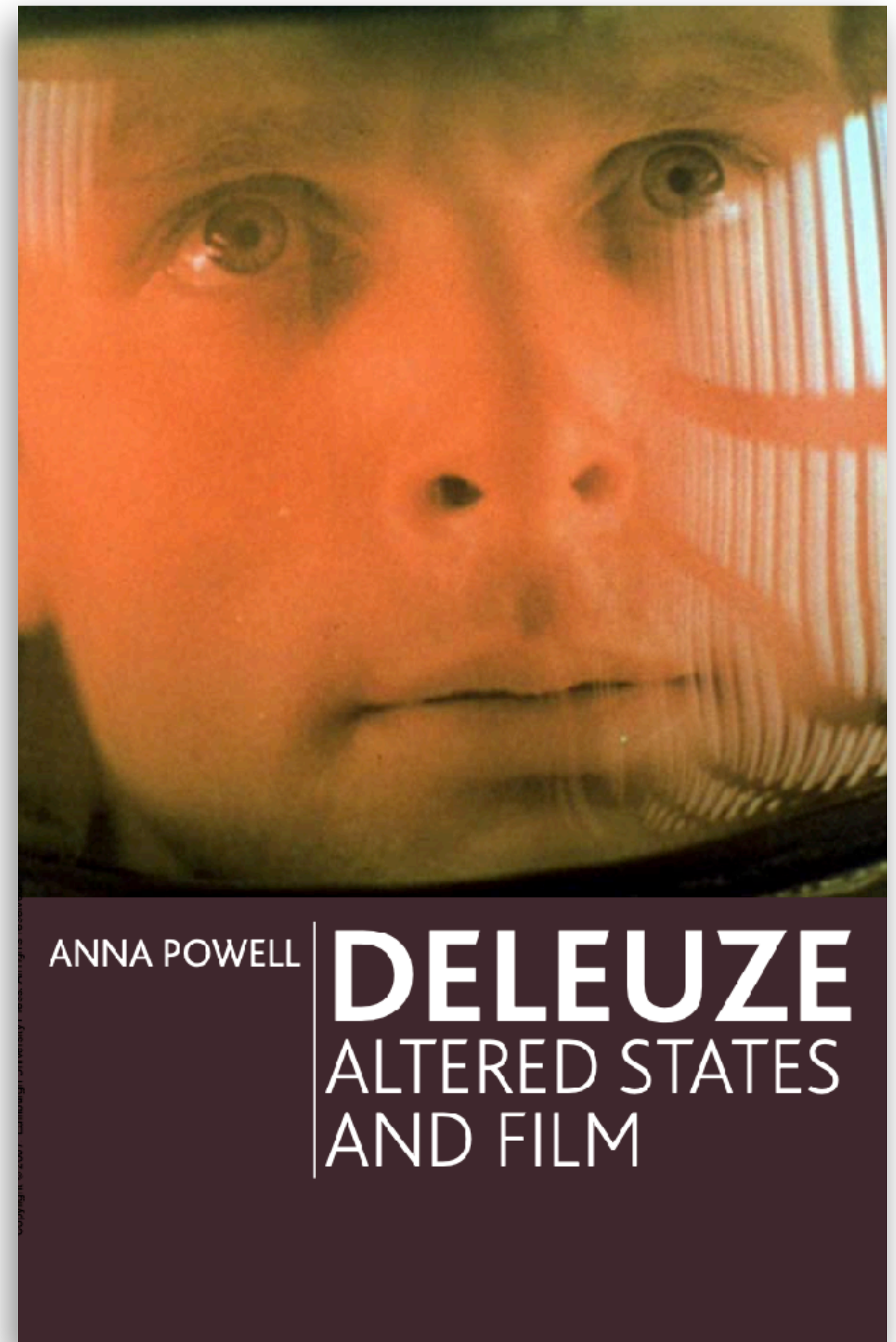
A MIRAMAX FILMS RELEASE IRISH SCHEEN PRESENTS A FRUIT SALAD FILM PRODUCTION A JUSTIN KERRIGAN FILM "HUMAN TRAFFIC"
JOHN SIMY LORRAINE PILKINGTON SHALY PARKES DANNY DYER NICOLA REYNOLDS DEAN DAVIES CASTING SUE JONES GARY HOWE
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS CLAIRE ANDERSON PRODUCED BY TONY LILLEY WRITTEN BY DAVE BUCKINGHAM DIRECTED BY PATRICK MOORE PRODUCED BY ROB MELLO WRITTEN BY MATTHEW HERBERT EDITED BY PETE TONG
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS DAVID BENNETT PRODUCED BY PUPERT PRESTON PRODUCED BY ARTHUR BAKER PRODUCED BY N GEL WYFFEN-GREEN PRODUCED BY MICHAEL WEARING PRODUCED BY KEVIN MENTON
PRODUCED BY PENATA S. ALY PRODUCED BY ALLAN NIBLO PRODUCED BY EMER McCOURT PRODUCED BY JUSTIN KERRIGAN

THE 'FUCK IT' PRINCIPLE BRITISH FILM & TV PT 1

WHY WOULD A COMPUTER GET HIGH..?

Consideration:

- Human consciousness is housed inside a feeling, organic body
- Human consciousness is affected by what we put in our organic bodies
- Intoxicants create a 'silent imperceptible crack' (Deleuze, 1990, pg 155) between the delicate porcelain of our consciousness and an erupting subterranean volcano (from Malcolm Lowry 'Under the Volcano')
- The 'crack' allows the drug user to stand outside of their habitual conscious state to witness their own engagement with time and space i.e. 'the brain becomes the screen' (Deleuze, 2000)
- The 'crack' allows the user to experience the 'nowness' to witness the coming together of past into present
- The 'crack' gives us concrete, irrefutable, primary knowledge of the oneness of all material things
- The 'crack' provides both: revelatory pantheistic wisdom; and a distinctive 'umwelt' (Uexküll, 1934) sense of self

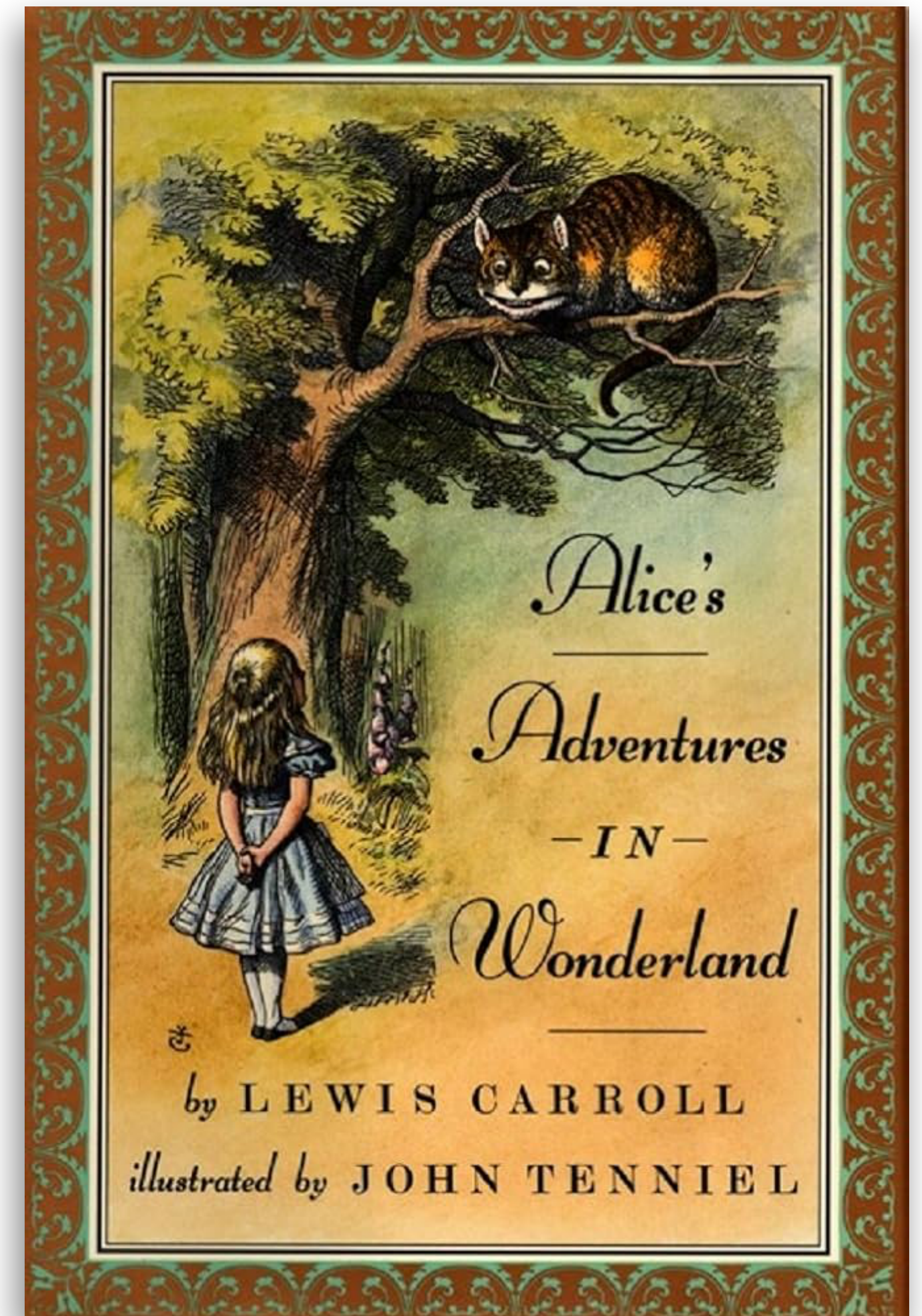


THE 'FUCK IT' PRINCIPLE BRITISH FILM & TV PT 2

WHY WOULD A HUMAN GET HIGH..?

Consideration:

- Taking drugs is risky
- Thanatos: not everyone comes back safely from the experience of playing with psychoactive drugs = (addiction, overdose, psychosis etc)
- Mythos: no one returns from taking psychoactive drugs the same as when they went in, it's a one way ticket
- British culture is steeped in stories of mythos and legend around drug use
- However, human beings have the ability to undertake wilful acts of **Akrasia**: the ability to act against our own rational best interests
- Drug use in British film and TV is often represented as a form of prioritising **Enkrateia**: the ability to exert self-mastery or power over one's passions and instincts
- Which leads to a final state of **Eudaimonia**: the ultimate state of good spirit, wellbeing



TILDA
SWINTON

THE SOUVENIR

★★★★★

Joshua Rothkopf, TIME OUT

CURZON.COM/THEsouvenir

**ALL FILMS THAT
PRESENT SCENES OR
THEMES OF DRUG
USE**

```
graph TD; A["ALL FILMS THAT PRESENT SCENES OR THEMES OF DRUG USE"] --> B["REALIST MODE"]; A --> C["EXPRESSIONISTIC MODES"];
```

REALIST MODE

**EXPRESSIONISTIC
MODES**

**EXPRESSIONISTIC
MODE**

```
graph TD; A[EXPRESSIONISTIC MODE] --> B[CLASS A<br/>(NOTHING TO DO WITH LEGAL<br/>DRUG CATEGORIES)]; A --> C[CLASS B<br/>(NOTHING TO DO WITH LEGAL<br/>DRUG CATEGORIES)]; B -.-> D[CLASS C<br/>COMBINATION OF<br/>CLASS A & B]; C -.-> D;
```

The diagram is a flowchart. At the top is a black rounded rectangle labeled 'EXPRESSIONISTIC MODE'. A solid line connects it to two black rounded rectangles below: 'CLASS A (NOTHING TO DO WITH LEGAL DRUG CATEGORIES)' on the left and 'CLASS B (NOTHING TO DO WITH LEGAL DRUG CATEGORIES)' on the right. Dotted lines from both Class A and Class B point to a pink rounded rectangle at the bottom labeled 'CLASS C COMBINATION OF CLASS A & B'. A solid arrow points down from the dotted lines to Class C.

CLASS A

**(NOTHING TO DO WITH LEGAL
DRUG CATEGORIES)**

CLASS B

**(NOTHING TO DO WITH LEGAL
DRUG CATEGORIES)**

CLASS C

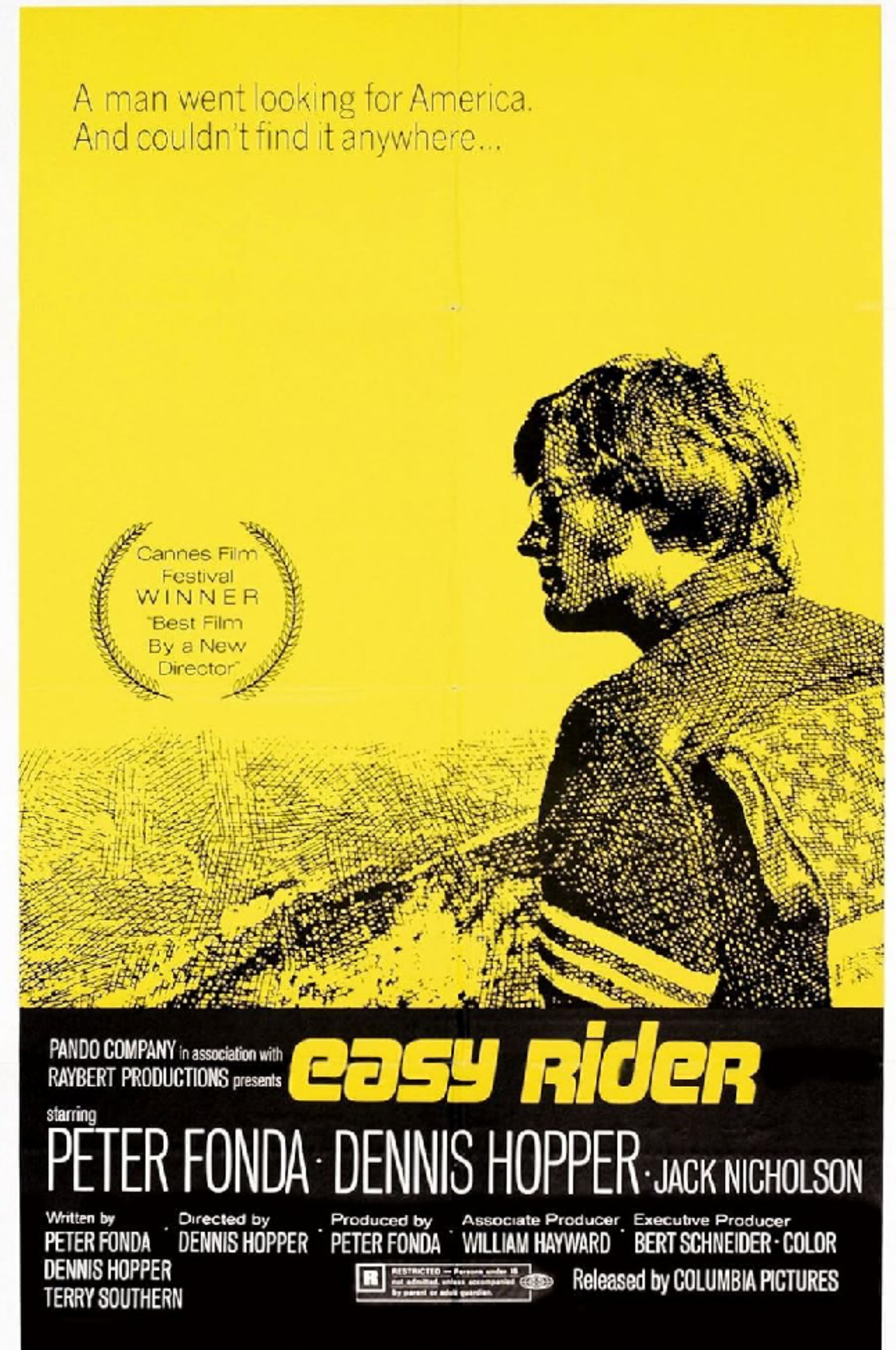
**COMBINATION OF
CLASS A & B**

'CLASS A' EXPRESSIONISTIC DRUG FILMS

Where the overarching logic of the film could be defined as being rationally framed within a non-drug-inflected realist materiality but it also contains at least one scene where a central character(s) ingests psychoactive drugs which results in an expressionistic on-screen depiction of the character(s) becoming high

Examples:

- ***Altered States* (Russell, 1980)**
- ***Trainspotting* (Boyle, 1996)**
- ***Queer* (Guardagnino, 2024)**
- ***Kneecap* (Peppiat, 2024)**

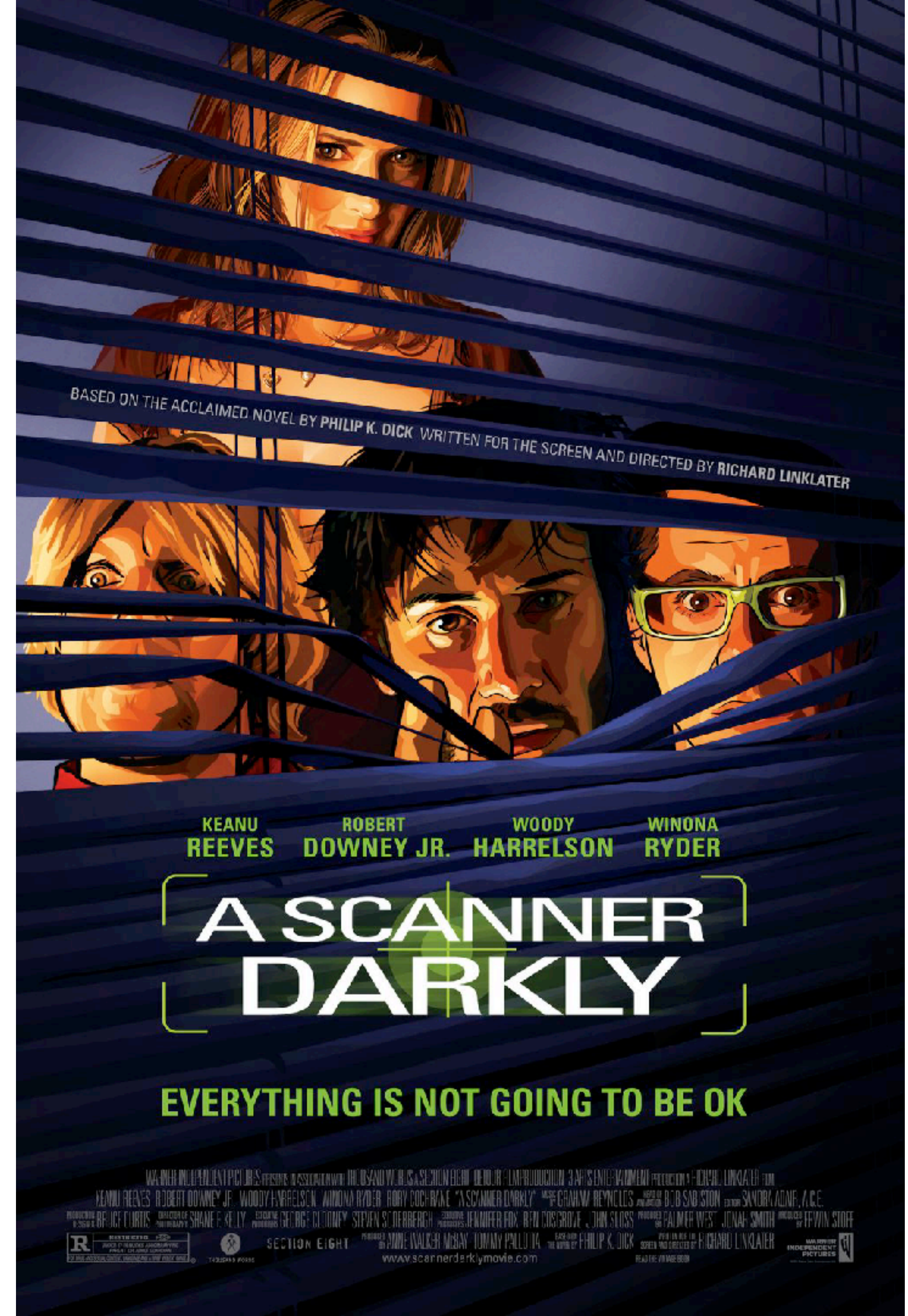


'CLASS B' EXPRESSIONISTIC DRUG FILMS

Where the filmmakers ongoing presentation of the central character(s) and the worlds that they inhabit are depicted as being permanently refracted through qualities associated with the consumption of psychoactive drugs and/or drug culture.

Examples:

- ***Inherent Vice* (Anderson, 2014)**
- ***The Doors* (Stone, 1991)**
- ***A Scanner Darkly* (Linklater, 2006)**

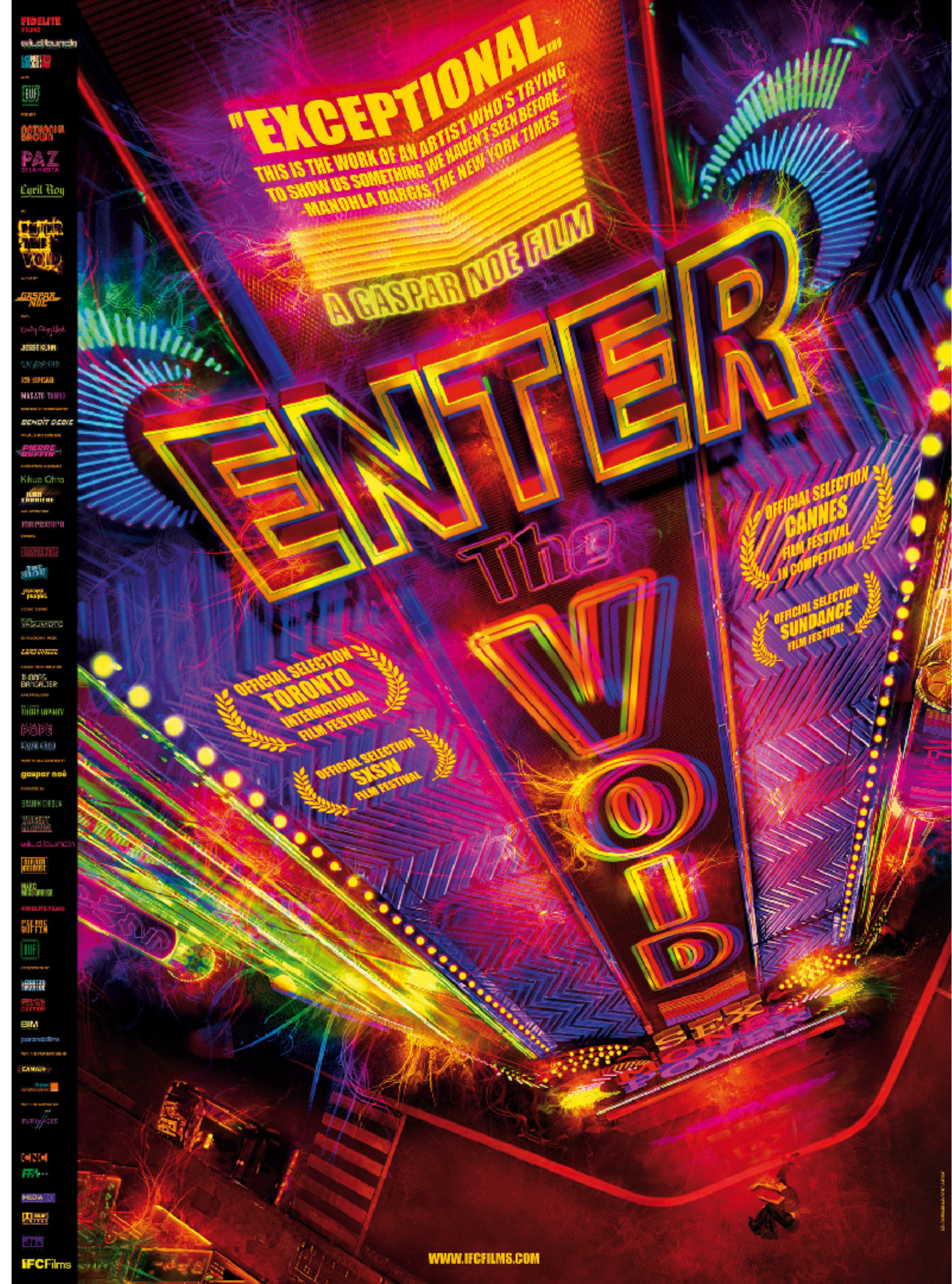


'CLASS C' EXPRESSIONISTIC DRUG FILMS

Where the filmmakers ongoing presentation of the central character(s) and the worlds that they inhabit are depicted as being permanently refracted through qualities associated with the consumption of psychoactive drugs and/or drug culture, and also contains at least one scene where a central character(s) ingests psychoactive drugs which results in an expressionistic on-screen depiction of the character(s) becoming high

Example:

- ***Enter the Void* (Noé, 2009)**



POWELL SUGGESTS:

***“THE AUTOMATISM OF CINEMA
DETERRITORIALISES PERCEPTION.
ANOMALOUS STATES OF
CONSCIOUSNESS CAN BE CELEBRATED
RATHER THAN PATHOLOGISED, BOTH FOR
THEIR STYLISTIC INNOVATIONS AND
THEIR IMPACT ON THE AUDIENCE WHO
PARTAKES OF THEIR AFFECTIVE
CONTAGION”***

***KNEECAP* (2024)**

- Film about an Irish band called Kneecap
 - BFI & Screen Ireland funding
 - Irish language film
 - Set in the north of Ireland
 - Rich Peppiatt - British director
-
- Meets the criteria for a 'Class A' category of expressionistic drug film
 - Uses a set of **expressionistic** filmmaking industrial practices to induce the 'crossing over' conditions for a of drug-inflected phenomenology that invites the audience beyond an inert spectatorial position towards an inherently human, multi-sensory and in *Kneecap's* case - British/Irish socio-political experience of identity through a specific kind of 'contact high' with on-screen characters and the drugs that they are consuming





KNEECAP

KNEECAP (2024)

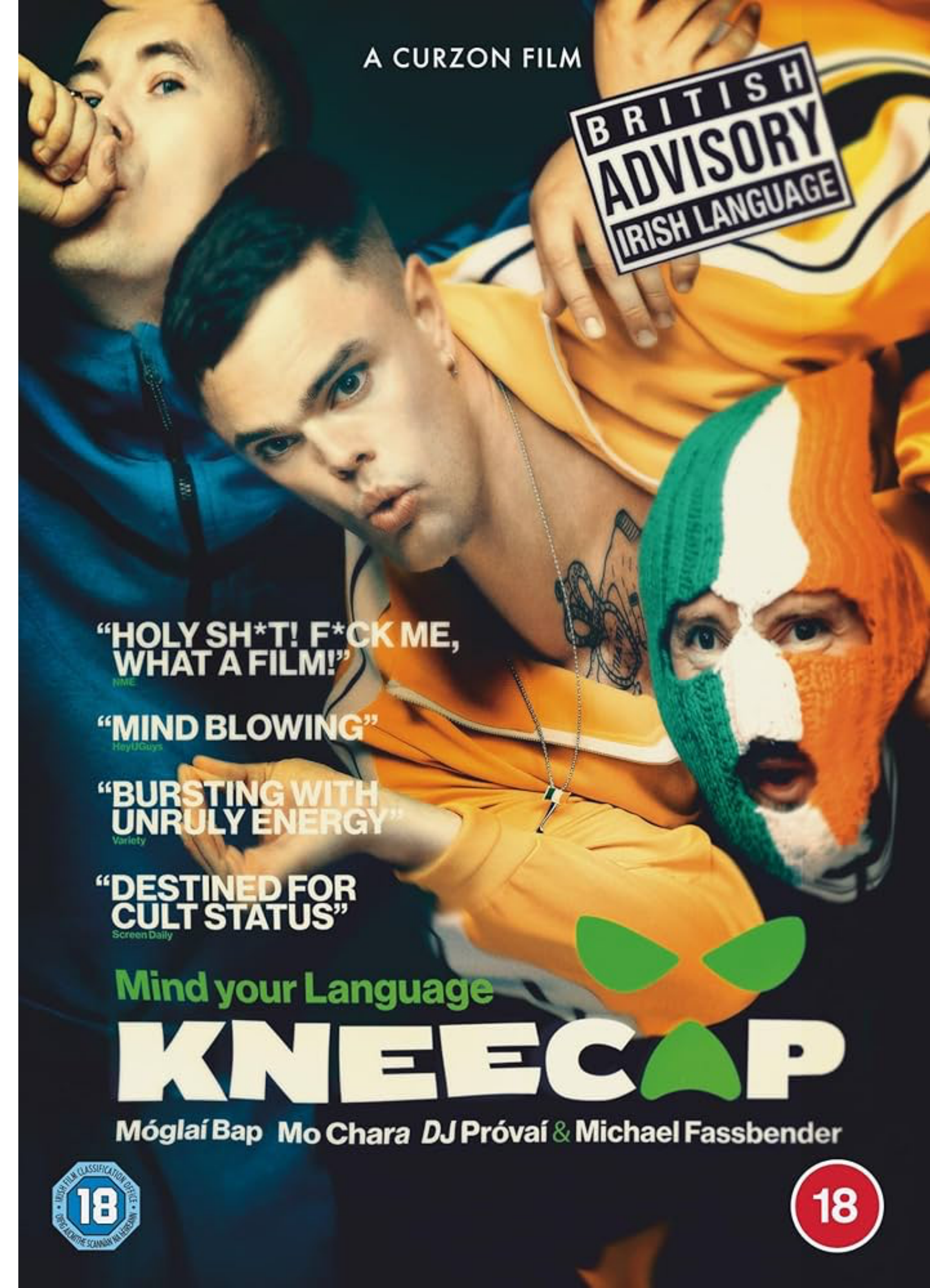
Is operating within the context of these thematic conditions:

- Anti Colonialist Irish Resistance
- Voice
- Independence
- Anti-Establishment
- The Craic

Kneecap is a Bromance Musical/Comedy that leverages these Class A type industrial practices:

- Copious on screen drug use followed by multiple, drug-inflected, expressionistic sequences
- Pays homage to Trainspotting - bin dive sequence
- Political Hallucinations - head shift to Gerry Adams sequence
- Bespoke sub-culturally inflected, hand written subtitles

“That’s drugs for you they bring you closer to god”
Móglai Bap (2024)



KNEECAP & CLASS A FILMMAKING

GENERATING A STONED HYPERDIEGESIS

- Fourth wall break (voice over to camera draws the audience into the sub-cultural inner circle)
- Internal diegetic sound (via voice over - see above)
- Magical realist flourishes - tiny sparkles at relevant times
- Lighting, everything is exaggerated in acid blues and pinks - emulates the stoned experiences
- Slips into stop motion animation when they accidentally ingest ketamine
- Sections shot in slow motion/reverse and then played forward to imitate the stoned experience

These industrial conditions (meta)reference and develop a stoned 'hyperdegesis' (Hills, 2014) within the film



***AN ONTOLOGY THAT DOES
NOT SEEK TO REDUCE
BEING TO THE KNOWABLE
BUT INSTEAD SEEKS TO
WIDEN THOUGHT TO
PALPATE THE UNKNOWNABLE***

TODD MAY (2004)

**CHOOSE LIFE. CHOOSE A JOB. CHOOSE A
CAREER. CHOOSE A FAMILY. CHOOSE A
FUCKING BIG TELEVISION...**

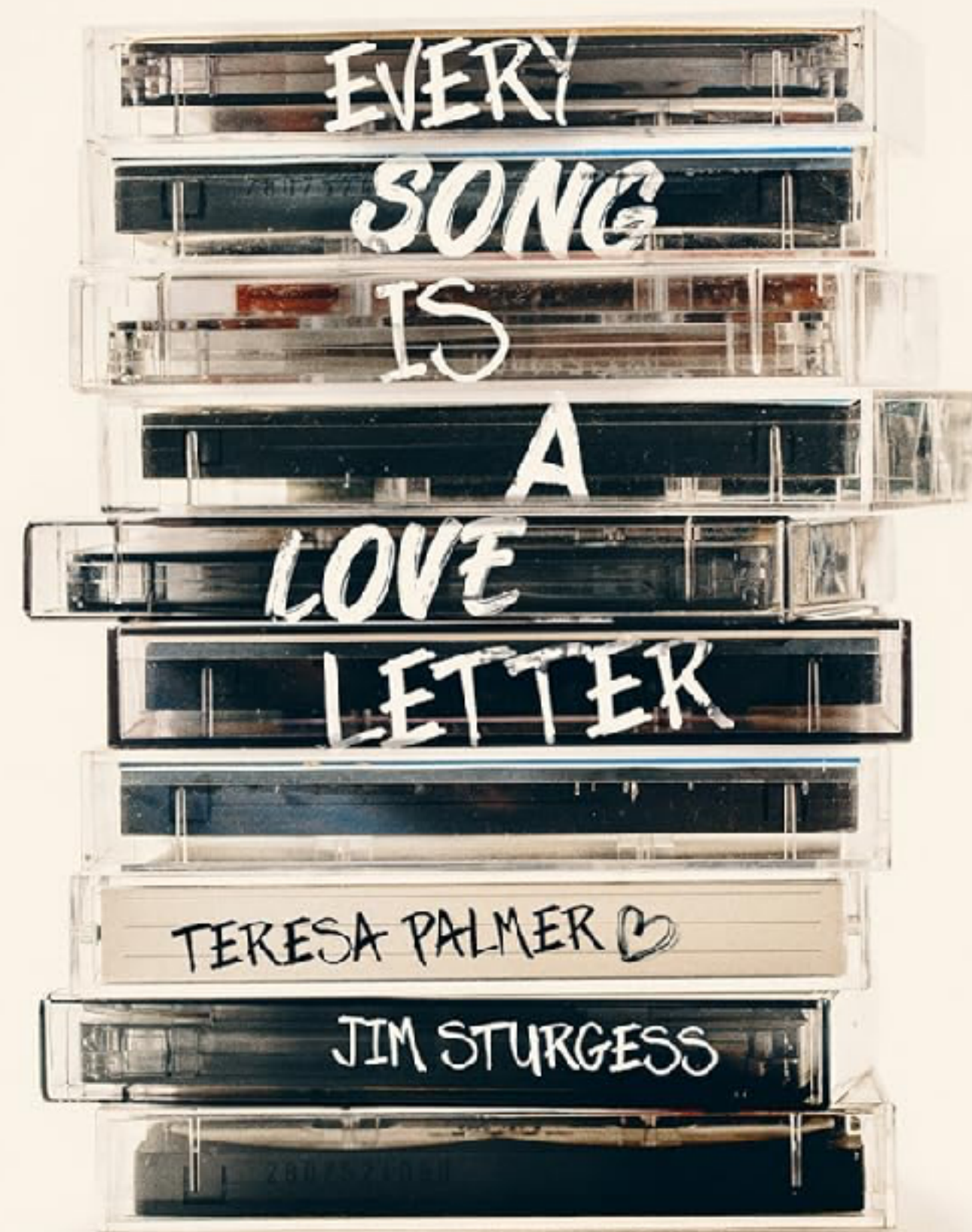
**BUT WHY WOULD I WANT TO DO A THING LIKE
THAT? I CHOSE NOT TO CHOOSE LIFE. I
CHOSE SOMETHIN' ELSE. AND THE
REASONS? THERE ARE NO REASONS. WHO
NEEDS REASONS WHEN YOU'VE GOT
HEROIN?**

MARK RENTON (1996)



HOW TO GET TO HEAVEN FROM BELFAST

TV DOES THIS TOO



BINGE Original

MIX TAPE

EVERY SONG IS A LOVE LETTER

REFERENCES

- **Deleuze, Gilles (1990) 'Porcelain and Volcano', in The Logic of Sense, trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale. New York: Columbia University Press**
- **Von Uexküll, Jakob, (1934) A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans**
- **Deleuze, Gilles (2000) 'The Brain Is the Screen', in Gregory A. Flaxman (ed.), The Brain is the Screen: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Cinema. Minnesota, MN and London: University of Minnesota Press**
- **Hills, Matt. (2014) When Doctor Who Enters its Own Timeline: The Database Aesthetics and Hyperdiegesis of Multi-Doctor Stories. Sage**
- **Powell, Anna. (2007) 'Deleuze, Altered States and Film'**
- **Willis Paul. 2002. The Cultural Meaning of Drug Use. Chapter in Jefferson. Tony. 2002. Resistance Through Rituals: Youth subcultures in post-war Britain. London. Routledge**

THE DRUG USER KNOWS THE SOCIAL WORKER MUCH BETTER THAN THE SOCIAL WORKER KNOWS HIM. THE POINT OF GREATEST DIVERGENCE BETWEEN THE OBJECTIVE, CAUSAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE DRUG PHENOMENON AND THE REAL EXPERIENTIAL NATURE OF INVOLVEMENT IN IT, IS PRECISELY THIS CONTRADICTION OF FREEDOM. FOR THE 'OBJECTIVE' GROUP, FREEDOM IS SELF-RESPONSIBILITY, FOR THE 'SUBJECTIVE' GROUP, YOU ARE ONLY REALLY FREE WHEN YOU ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR YOURSELF.