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A R T S A N D F I L M G U I D E

This Week In Arts 31ST AUGUST 2005

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Tom did not say those things."

'Tom Cruise representative' reporting that a recent Internet 'interview' that quoted Cruise as saying he was a reincarnation of English playwright William Shakespeare was indeed a hoax. But who knows what Tombot would say these days...

Best Piece Of Arts In Town

Alakazam! by Will Sweeney and Susumu Mukai



Following their delightful Max Doyle spotlight, Someday Gallery keep up the good work with another fabby exhibition opening this week. *Alakazam!* is a collection of magical works by London-based illustrators Susumu Mukai and Will Sweeney. The exhibition materialises on Someday's walls this Thursday (with a launch at 7pm) and then continues until September 18th. Shazam!

Must Read

"People think I'm laidback. I'm actually just tired."

Comedian Carl Barron sets the record straight about his schtick, page 103.

Seven Up

QUALITY MOVIES FOR SPIRITUALLY MINDED PEOPLE

1. *Wings Of Desire* (Wim Wenders, 1987)
2. *The Seventh Seal* (Ingmar Bergman, 1957)
3. *Breaking The Waves* (Lars Von Trier, 1996)
4. *Life Of Brian* (Terry Jones, 1979)
5. *Kundun* (Martin Scorsese, 1997)
6. *The Message* (Moustapha Akkad, 1976)
7. *The Razor's Edge* (John Byrum, 1984)

- Cam Grace

Stealth Giveaway



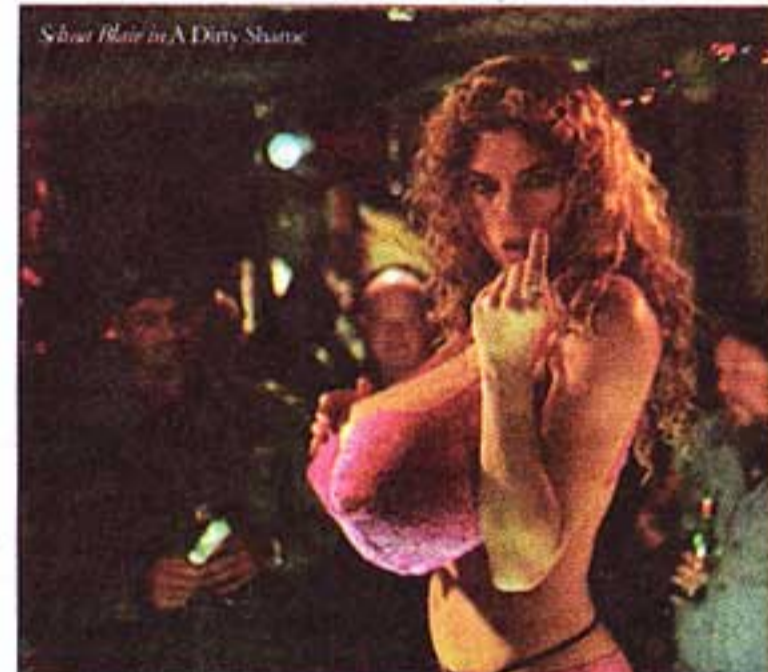
Stealth is an action thriller about a squadron of elite pilots who embark on a mission of global consequence to neutralize an out-of-control prototype drone fighter plane equipped with artificial intelligence and the ability to precipitate a nuclear war. Filmed in Australia, *Stealth* should delight action movie nuts and Jessica Biel fans alike. We have five double-passes to a special preview of the film (Monday 5th September at 6.30pm at Hoyts Victoria Gardens), so call us (stat!) if you're up for some high-falutin' action on 9681 9910 at 5pm today.

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John Waters



Talk Dirty To Me

Legendary auteur JOHN WATERS tells EMMA WESTWOOD that *A Dirty Shame* has a moral heart... sort of. "The film does ask the question 'Can tolerance go too far?' Do I really have to worry about the rights of adult babies?"

Baltimore's most famous cultural ambassador, John Waters, is taking a break from his writing schedule in Cape Cod. He's just finished preparing a new television show called *John Waters Presents Movies That Will Corrupt You* and started penning his next feature film, about which he is protective and reticent to discuss. "My little friends are in my head and in this little box," explains Waters. "I have a black leather box that's got all my handwritten notes. But I never talk about it until I do it because, if you talk about it now, then it evaporates and makes it not real. As you know, you've got to talk about it for five years afterwards. I thought I'd given the last interviews for *A Dirty Shame* but now... We're in Australia!"

Waters refers to the belated local release of his 2004 feature film, which heralds his return to the big screen in stunning form. *A Dirty Shame* sees the auteur come full circle, evoking the deliciousness of such politically incorrect romps as *Desperate Living*, *Female Trouble* and, most significantly, 1972's legendary *Pink Flamingos*. In *Pink Flamingos*, the characters battle it out for the title of 'The Filthiest Person Alive' with the late and truly great Divine ultimately winning the crown after famously chowing down on a freshly brewed dog turd. *A Dirty Shame* follows such lead by serving up all manner of unspeakable sexual fetish. Sylvia Stickle (Tracey Ullman) is an upright and unhappy housewife until reborn as a rampant sex addict after receiving a dong to the head. Little does she know, but the town is teeming with people just like her, those yearning to live out their sexual freedoms, headed by the charismatic Ray-Ray Perkins (*Jackass* superstar Johnny Knoxville).

Unbelievable as it may seem for this filmmaker of 40 years, Waters is greatly indebted to the inclusion of Knoxville in the cast. "The whole reason the movie got made was because he agreed to star in it," Waters humbly concedes. "They always say you need a star attached and Knoxville could have got the movie made quicker than Katharine Hepburn if she came back from the dead. They [the studios] only care, really, about someone 'with heat.' What they mean is someone who's had a hit in the last four months that young people know. That's how movies get made. Not on careers of brilliant film acting."

A Dirty Shame is what Waters describes as his "sex education movie" - "a vocabulary lesson" - the script gob-smackingly dense with innuendo, metaphors and the oddest of sexual oddities. When pressed to reveal where he uncovered all this intricate detail, Water says it comes from a lifetime of research. "Some of the stuff I remember from sex clubs, like Hellfire Club in New York where I saw this man licking the

floor," he explains. "I read this book in school called *The Erotic Minorities* by Dr Lars Ullerstam and it was the first time I'd read about weird sexual fetishes. I always just sort of collected this type of stuff. So it came from a lifetime knowledge of filth."

Every conceivable act appears to have been covered in the film, but what about 'The Cleveland Steamer' (pooping between the boobs then ploughing through it with... ahem... well, you know where this is heading) and 'Dirty Sanchez' (a finger to the derriere, which is then used to paint a chocolatey moustache)? "I tried to do ones that weren't unsafe," admits Waters, who appears instantly familiar with both terms. "The Dirty Sanchez is unsafe. I had to be responsible. You know, I am making a movie that's on the side of the sex addicts so everything in there is safe. It's not anti-women. It's not mean to women, it doesn't degrade women and it's safe. You can't get pregnant, you can't get AIDS from any of the stuff in the movie."

Hang on now, John... Are you telling us that the 'Upper Decker' (taking a sly dump in the top of the toilet cistern) is really something that's safe? "Well, you don't touch it, you just run in horror. Or you wear gloves. Turd harassment. That's a new form of terrorism."

For someone so *au fait* with the gross, it's hard to believe anything could possibly curl Waters' stomach. However, he readily puts up his hand to nominate the shot where a guy socks back a vase of dirty flower water as the grossest in the movie; a scene reminiscent to the gulping of a jar of tears in *Cry-Baby*. Says Waters, "Everyone thinks when they empty a vase of flower water 'Ew, that's disgusting' but no one's ever thought of drinking it - except for me. When you drink tears, you're longing for a love lost. When you drink flower water, I guess it's self-humiliation. I think it's different. You don't need a partner to drink flower water. To drink your own tears, you need a partner to cry over. One is more narcissistic than the other."

One of the most endearing and subtly humorous elements of *A Dirty Shame* is the film's rockabilly and bubblegum pop tunes; all seemingly innocent until you hear 'pussy' and 'penis' creep into the lyrics. "I wrote the whole script listening to music. I always do that," ventures Waters. "The music in this movie, except for *Let's Go Sexing* and the wonderful score that George S. Clinton did for us, they're all real songs. They were what they called 'party records'. In the '50s, you couldn't say anything. I mean, Lenny Bruce went to jail in American for saying 'fuck' so, basically, you bought records, LPs, that were dirty comedy

records and people had parties, drank, got drunk and," John makes guffawing sound, "listened to these dirty songs. *The Pussycat Song* is a pretty famous one, actually. I work with a great guy called Larry Benicewicz who really has this incredible knowledge of obscure redneck music and really early, what we would call, race music. *Eager Beaver Baby*... That's a real song! *Itchy Twitchy Spot*... That is a real song! They didn't get much radio play."

"We had fun just finding the rights to them," continues Waters. "And basically, [music supervisor] Tracy McKnight who works with Larry, to get the rights for these songs, she had to find the writer of the music and the publisher of the music. And talk about really going on a hunt. It took months and months. We found people in nursing homes! She also did my Christmas album. I had a Christmas album that came out last year called *A John Waters Christmas*. The same kind of songs, except it's about Christmas... like *Santa Claus Is A Black Man*."

While unwilling to name his favourite point in the movie, John Waters admits the 'nursing home hokey-pokey' always gets the biggest laugh, no matter what country or language. Without spoiling the fun, let's just say Ullman's sexually blossoming Sylvia gets happy on a litre bottle of soft drink while letting loose with the old folks. "Tracey had a magnet in her underpants and there was also a magnet in the bottle," Water tells about shooting the scene. "Basically, when we were testing it with the prop guy, we were outside the studio trying to see how we could make it work. And she [Ullman] was doing it and we looked over and there was a gas station across the street with all the people that worked in the gas station with their mouths hanging open in shock looking over. We didn't realise people were watching us! She's going - put the bottle down. Pick it up. Put the bottle down. Pick it up. They were so stupefied. Her kids were there too, visiting on the set, which I thought was lovely."

"I think Big Ethel (Sylvia Stickle's mum) has some of the funniest dialogue in the film and I'm actually more on the side of Big Ethel than people know," continues Waters. "The film does ask the question 'Can tolerance go too far?' Do I really have to worry about the rights of adult babies? I mean, I guess they should be allowed to do it. I'm glad I'm not one of them." And, perhaps surprisingly considering his career of championing the queer, Waters concludes: "If I had a child, I would be uptight if they told me they were an adult baby."

A Dirty Shame opens in selected cinemas tomorrow.