

Now showing

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- p. 3 Lucy Baxendale - Monster matinee
- p. 4 Gareth Williams - Charlie Chaplin
- p. 5 Russell Taysom - Shandyman
- p. 6 Llew Watkins - Genesis
- p. 8 BANS illustration - Everything's the same and everyone's just sad
- p. 9 Arabella Simpson - Labyrinth
- p.10 Josh Hight - Horror is my only friend
- p.11 Jed Artley - Wyeseid story
- p.12 Elspeth Anne - Stills from a film
- p.16 Tom Rees - Lorem Ipsum
- p.20 David Savagar - Watching paddington
- p.21 John Rose - At the drive in
- p.22 Steph Moulden - Can't sit with us
- p.24 John Rose - Gojira
- p.25 David Savagar - Rubbish at the multiplex
- p.26 Omar Majeed - Blow Up blown up
- p.27 Ben Brown - Tree
- p.28 Hanna Kas Illustration - Gangbang
- p.30 Johnny Burrage and Omar Majeed - Barry and Norman
- p.34 BANS illustration - Life is Great
- p.35 Arabella Simpson - Snape
- p.36 Chris White - Chicken Skin Bellows
- p.37 Lucy Ross - Casabaanca
- p.38 Nigel Farr - The Film Location Wasteland
- p.41 Gareth Williams - Space, the final frontier
- p.42 Rex Birchmore -Big town telly
- p.43 Beth Crossland - Cinema Rif

Cinema Rif - or How I Learned To Stop Worrying and Love Tangier

I was going to Tangier and I was apprehensive. The decision had been made with some spontaneity while drinking Cerveza at a bar in Cadiz. Three days later and we were getting our passports stamped on a high speed ferry bumping along to Tangier, heart in throat.

The Tangier in my head had been created through hastily read blog posts and a half forgotten conversation about dodgy taxi drivers and dirt. A seedy port where locals want to scam you and you are a fool not to wear your backpack backwards is the general idea. But this isn't the idea I have anymore. Thanks in part to the institution which is called Cinema Rif, an art house type cinema in the middle of Tangier between a mosque and a fish market.

It happened to be outside of Cinema Rif that we first stopped to ask for directions to our riad, perhaps because it was a hint of familiarity in a pretty foreign environment. You can watch Fred Astaire in 'Top Hat', Asif Kapadia's 'Amy', or Michel Gondry's 'Be Kind Rewind' this week. 'Karyan Bollywood', not the only Moroccan film showing, betrays the presence of Bollywood in Moroccan popular culture.

Tangier is full of places to sit, smoke cigarettes and drink thé à la menthe and Cinema Rif is one of the coolest. Like the Cinema, the tea shops are independently owned and the absence of the chains found in every UK High Street was a novelty that never wore off. The local people seemed to have an air of 'hanging about' around them. Shopkeepers seem like they are accidentally in a shop. We climbed the stairs to one teteria near the kasbah and found the proprietor reclining on plush red chaise longue. Fisherman descale the day's catch among the restaurants of Petit Socco, sharing the bounty with the many stray cats of the medina. Not that the cats seem that bothered either way.



It's this laid back atmosphere moulded by the freedom from starbucks and freedom from health and safety rules and freedom from no smoking signs and wet floor cones that makes up the Tangier that I love.

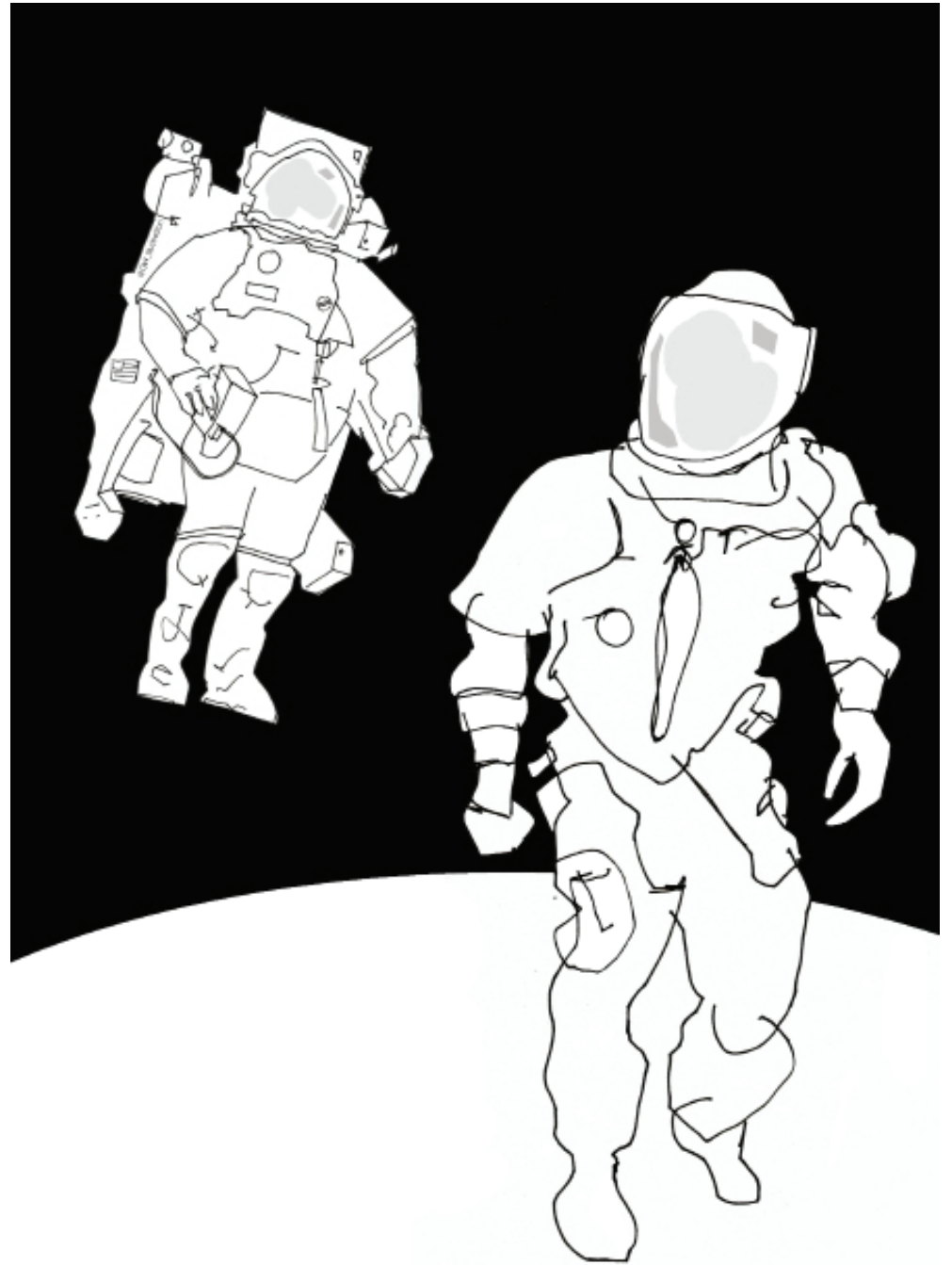
To me, Cinema Rif has become a symbol for the cool, laid back Tangier that can be obscured by the initial intimidation felt by the incomprehensible language, stares of street sellers and the robed old man whispering 'hashish?' in your ear as you walk along the beach. Cinema is a portal to an unknown world, but in this case it was a portal to the place I was already in. What is so exciting is realising that perhaps every daunting city, country, or situation has a Cinema Rif in it. It just has to be found.

And I've heard that they do a good quiche, too.



let's all go to the
Big Town Telly







Genesis

The furniture is always broken and useless,
a wet mattress in the rain, yet still cuts
my thoughts a second, resourcefulness
a habit learned at art school
but on a Wednesday night
perhaps a little depressed or bored
I go to Genesis, by far the greatest cinema.

Just two, maybe three times
each film the sudden airy panorama
as I recollect my surroundings,
see the screen as screen,
the rows of people in the dark.

Mad Max is red and violent and brilliant,
and in that cocoon the mind is lulled,
seduced completely,
led as if a pre-pubescent girl by elves:

She leaves behind an empty bed
and a silent, angry, grieving father,
just the littlest hints
though secretly he's always known
they'd come
for her, and things gone wrong for weeks;
the sheep laying only in the dead
of night and fussy that they be at certain spots
and kicking up a holy ruckus
if not, like badgers beaten in a bag.



Coober Pedy...

Welcome to the film

location Wasteland

Coober Pedy. White man's Hole. A desert made up of Mars-like landscaped red sand, where the climate is so hostile the locals live underground. Scattered abandoned vehicles litter the roadsides amongst folk art, surrealist exhibitions that rust and decay in the sun viewed by some of the many stray dogs that roam with willful abandon. This landscape has lent itself to many films such as Mad Max, Red Planet, Stark and Pitch Black, remnants of such are found scattered around the town with the most bizarre being the spaceship from the film Pitch Black which now stands on the main high street connected to a public toilet and shower block.



38

On the mantelpiece a jar of water
overturned and frozen
in a cascade of spines
are prickly flowers dried and spinning gently
in the bad burnt air.

Just as a girl is disappeared
and taken by the fey,
just as the fey folk don't necessarily feel
the full implications of their actions,
just so the girl, herself entranced,
didn't fight but went dutifully;
enraptured, calm.
Just so tonight my mind is glued to Max
and Max's mind is glued to war.

Llew Watkins

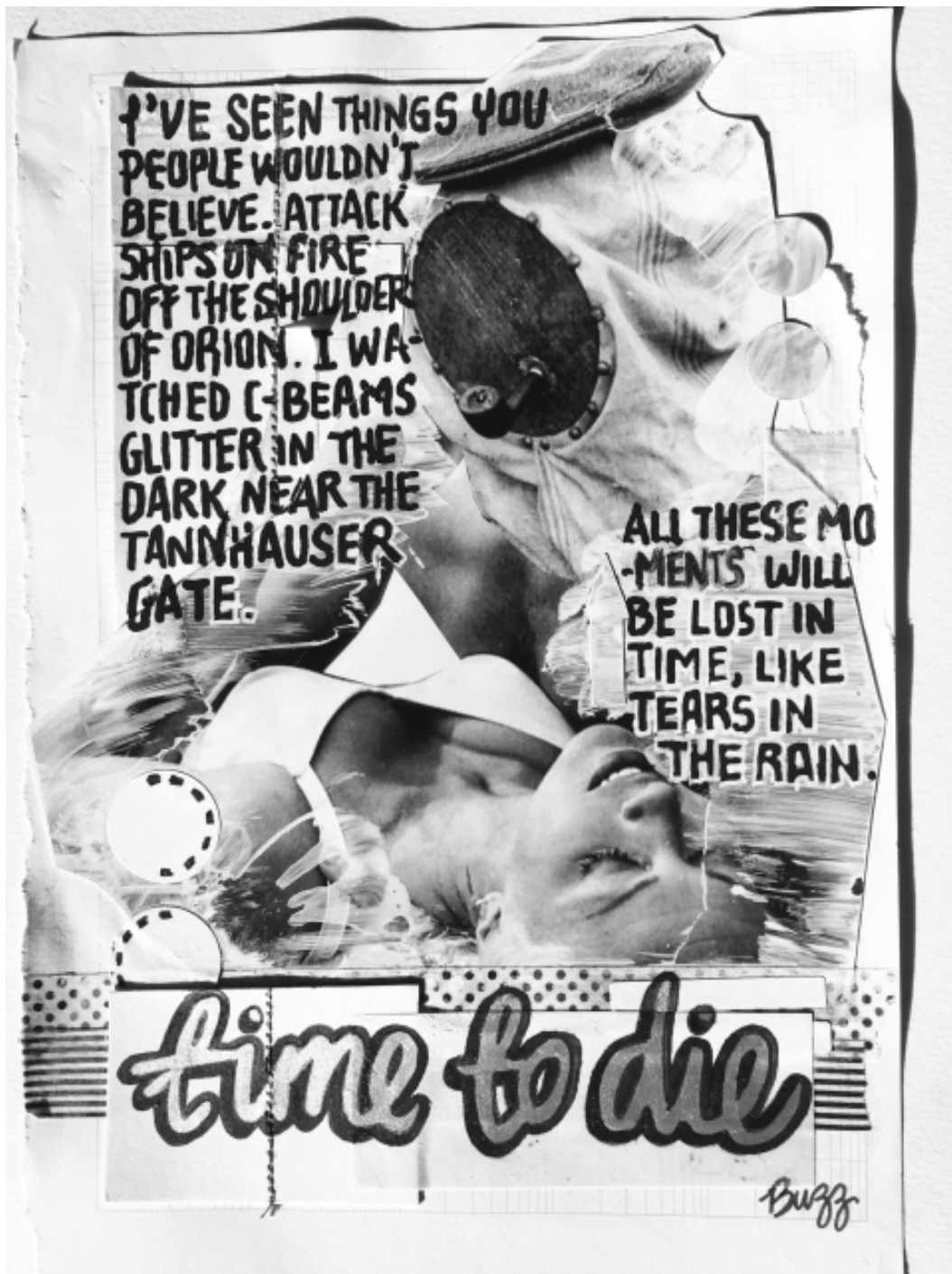
7

CASABLANCA



HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU, KID.





THE LABYRINTH

ALSO

FEATURING

DAVID BOWIE

AS

"GOBLIN KING"





SWAPE



INN

ALAN
RICKMANN

AS

"SWAPE"






Wyeside Story

In front of th cinema
two boys went at it
kicking and shouting.
Th staff inside
stare out at them
sometimes turning to each other,
laughing - as if watching a film
One of them goes and gets
an old poster from th back,
blue-tacks it quickly to th window
facing into th street –
'Clash of th Titans: Now Showing'

I look up from my writing.
do a sort of dry half-chuckle
into a tall and sweating glass
wet breakfast.
th scene's alright,
if you like cheap 90's humour
but is that th sort of director
i want to be?
th beach in front is so white
it makes my eyes hurt
bleaches all my ideas –
now more Mad Max than Clerks
neither really works
but if i also send this,
whilst it makes th beginning
seem only part-done,
with thought process thrown in
it becomes a bit Kaufman
and this way at least
meets th deadline.



Norman – No, Mars was. There's loads of appropriations of meanings in classical cultures for different gods and planets. Neptune was the god of the sea, which meant navy, which meant war. Anything could be war.

Barry – They made Venus war, even, didn't they?

Norman – Hell yeah.

Barry – What's the symbolism of Pluto?

Norman – What?

Barry – They didn't know about it did they. I don't know what to make of these high rise coffin flats.

Norman – Brutalist rationale taken to the nth degree.

Barry – He has a knack for extrapolation.

Norman – Oh yeah. If you'd been around at the time you'd have been outraged by the inhuman built environment.

Barry – are they trying to show their commitment to enlightenment by burning their money? In the biblical passage about giving away your material possessions it seems like an idealistic thing, but these people seem vain, the whole thing decadent.

Norman – He was from a background in Catholicism so was aware of the dogma in his work. He was making satire. They're making ef-

figies of themselves. [laughing]
The foley arts in that bit makes me laugh every time.

Barry – Foley arts?

Norman – Overdubbed sound effects.

Barry – The Aleph? Borges wrote a short story called the Aleph. It was about a room under the stairs that contained all the universe or something.

Norman – The Aleph is a room under the Vatican that's full of statues stolen from other cultures.

Barry – It's also the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet [...] They didn't have mescaline in biblical times.

Norman – St John was off his tits. But that's not the point. The pilgrims walk past the false prophets. That guy was meant to be full of shit. It's not meant to be accurate.

Barry – The end reminds me of that Khalil Gibran poem, The Blessed Mountain. They call it the Blessed Mountain because once you've climbed it you want to live in the deepest valley.

calves.

Norman - [laughs]

Barry - the artificial faces and animated corpses seem the logical conclusion of consumerist society.

Norman - Yeah, yeah yeah. Symmetrical staircases have always been and always will be necessary.

Barry - A touch of the Kubrick about it.

Norman - I'm too drunk for this. Single point perspective for each eye. I love the heavy breathing fish.

Barry - fish out of water.

Norman - No, he's in deep. [Pleased] That was good!

Barry - The love machine predicted the VR porn thing that's happening at the moment. Did it?

Norman - Pretty much. The retardis. A visual euphemism. So terrible.

Barry - Has it had a baby?

Norman - Self replicating machines in bantam boxing matches. Saggitarian baby Jesus. The elephant riding down goddess. As she reaches the armadillo dome and falls down a chemical luge of ravenous apartheid intent.

Barry - I'm glad we didn't take any drugs.

Norman - What?

Barry - I wonder what the budget of this was. It's quite extensive in the scenes and props. What's the word?

Norman - Sets. You alright?

Barry - Yeah. I was trying to have thoughts on this. I was thinking it was dystopian. I trailed off.

Norman - It's hyperreal.

Barry - I was wondering when it's set?

Norman - Does it matter? It was happening then. It's then to the nth degree.

Barry - Why is the toilet so tall?

Norman - You know, I don't know that one.

Barry - They're presenting the elevation of the scatological.

Norman - It's putting it on a podium.

Barry - By knitting a jumper for a snake they're trying to make it cuddly.

Norman - I like how you're trying to work it out for yourself now.

Barry - I wish I knew what these symbols all meant.

Norman - That's Neptune. It's the trident.

Barry - Is Neptune the god of war?



wanking off over the body of Christ. Or his nostril.

Barry – What’s he made of, cake?

Norman – Marzipan. And good marzipan at that. [...] Another diocese, red and blue, tussle in the wind for the upholding of Jesus.

Barry – Is that a big fishhook he’s on?

Norman – No fishing metaphors in film deconstruction. I love you but what the fuck? The perforated eardrum of the people. I should have been a poet not a critic.

Barry – That was quite poetic. Cool tats!

Norman – She was only one of the Ethiopian people on the ark.

Barry – You know that flood? in the bible? They found a meteorite fell in that area.

Norman – Really? Solomon’s gallstone.

Barry – Urgh! He’s cutting a boil!

Norman – Susan? I’m too drunk now. The jilted octopus bequeaths a generation.

Barry – That’s the first sentence anyone’s said and we’re ten minutes in!

Norman – Jesus returns to Butlins. To raise the dead. It is but a hammer in the hamster wheel. The bell jar, the carafe.

Should be buried in the garden.

Barry – They’re liquefying his shit! And who’s the pelican?

Norman – He is uncleanable. In the confinement. You get it.

Barry – Is this where the gold is going to come from? Is he a goose? With all the mirrors it’s like that scene in Enter the Dragon.

Norman – You know the scale of beige. Silky gowns... hang on I’m rapturing out. Hang on we’re rapturing out. Hang on. No just a touch of croup coming on.

Barry- There’s lots of shapes everywhere.

Norman – Do you know those symbols at the side?

Barry – No. The one in the middle looks like ‘om’.

Norman – It’s a corruption of ‘om’. It’s more like resistance.

Barry – Did you know what the shapes at the side were?

Norman – Distillation.

Barry – Did they show this in cinemas?

Norman – Only in mirrors.

Barry – She’s eating and smothering her face with pearls.

Norman – It’s more pearl barley.

Barry – Pronounced prosthetic

Transcript for an alternative commentary on *The Holy Mountain* (1973)

A conversation between film critics Barry and Norman

Norman – Iconic aesthetics are an understatement for *The Holy Mountain*. A welsh hat like a hotcake sold to the businessman of the 1970s.

Barry – I don't know how he can see under it [...] That's interesting, it's like a mandala.

Norman – Ronald Frangepan, the best name ever.

Barry – What's he carrying? Is it an animal leg?

Norman – What was I saying?

Barry – I don't know. Something about a welsh hat. Are they smoking drugs?

Norman – I think they're smoking drugs. And he's wiping his forehead with his stump. And they love each other. How many staged dead bodies? Watch this bit! That's fucking gorgeous! It's like a super sacrosanct macro scaling of the occupation by western culture.

Barry – Why are those crusaders toads? I mean why are those toads crusaders?

Norman – It has ever been thus. Several real frogs were killed for the making of this film.

Barry – That's sad. Are those

sweet potatoes?

Norman – I think they're yams. Swift yams. [...] Typecast as a false idol a white Darth Vader emerges from his cocoon of false idols.

Barry – Did you hear about that Russian guy who drank so much he was declared dead, and woke up in a morgue, then went for a drink?

Norman – El Topical. [...] It's a trivialized miracle.

Barry – Is he meant to be Jesus?

Norman (laughing) – No... Check out those nuns! Except that one, she's too young.

Barry – Are those nuns?

Norman – They're a conceptualization of nuns.

Barry – Why do they look like prostitutes?

Norman – In Portuguese, "conceptualization" is the collective noun for nuns.

Barry – Is that true?

Norman – No.

Barry – He's bearing his own cross and it looks like himself.

Norman – Iconogouques. And gas masks.

Barry – Why is that bishop talking like a duck?

Norman – Because he got caught









18



27



BLOW-UP



26



19





SIT WITH US,
YOU CAN'T

