



DECEMBER 2019 NEWSLETTER

Hello to all our members.

2019 is drawing swiftly to a close. Our Christmas dinners and final screenings are right around the corner, followed by a long break before the 2020 program commences in February.

Many of 2019's year's best films were, as ever, small independent and foreign films, including *The Nightingale*, *Parasite*, *I Am Mother*, *Ready Or Not* and *Midsommar*.

Even so, much of the year's big cinematic talking points concern the business side: corporate mergers, box-office performance, and franchise successes and setbacks.

In 2019, Disney remained an unstoppable force in the entertainment industry, absorbing 20th Century Fox and releasing a vast array of films, both in-house and through the many other companies it has acquired.

Many Disney fans grew increasingly tired of Disney's recent trend of remaking their classics in live-action, after the pointlessly similar *Lion King* and *Aladdin* remakes.

Marvel Studios triumphantly concluded its Cinematic Universe experiment with *Avengers: Endgame*, while the Terminator franchise floundered once again with *Terminator: Dark Fate*, a solid film that underperformed dismally at the box-office.

Fox's *X-Men* film series ended with not quite a whimper, but certainly an underwhelming conclusion in *Dark Phoenix*; Marvel comics fans are already anticipating the X-Men's entry into the MCU.

The Star Wars sequel trilogy will end with *The Rise of Skywalker* on December 19. In the meantime, Disney+ is broadcasting the critically-acclaimed *The Mandalorian* TV series.

Fans are raving about the new *Watchmen* TV series on HBO, which superbly captures the essence of Alan Moore's original comic book series.

Apple began producing original content, launching a streaming service called Apple TV Plus and releasing several intriguing films and TV series, including the alternate-history space race drama *For All Mankind* and the post-apocalyptic action series *See*. It's too bad that any Mac users without Mac OS Catalina can't use this service...

As for the Oscars back in February, *Green Book* won Best Picture, sparking a *Crash*-level of backlash.

I have big plans for next year's newsletter.

I've noticed that **2000** and **2020** have long been regarded as default years for "the future" in popular fiction. To people of the twentieth century (and earlier), **2000** and **2020** were both far off and nice round numbers to denote an advanced faraway time.

When 2000 passed, and the world was not nearly as high-tech as people had hoped, 2020 became the new shorthand year for the future in fiction.

Since we're about to enter 2020, and yet another shorthand year for the future will become the present (and then the past), I want to review as many films as possible that take place in the year 2020 for our newsletter.

I won't be reviewing films that come out next year, which are set in 2020 simply by virtue of being set when they come out. I will focus on films made in the past that were deliberately set in the future time of 2020.

I hope you enjoyed 2019's films and our Society program, I hope you enjoy my little project for next year's newsletters, I hope you have a fantastic holiday season, and I hope you enjoy next year's films.

NEXT YEAR'S GENERAL PROGRAM

February:	<i>The Hundred-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out of the Window and Disappeared</i>	2013 Swedish comedy
March:	<i>Secrets and Lies</i>	1996 British drama
April:	<i>Living Is Easy With Eyes Closed</i>	2013 Spanish comedy-drama
May:	<i>Amour</i>	2013 French drama-romance
June:	<i>Goldstone</i>	2016 Australian Western
July:	<i>Arctic</i>	2018 Icelandic thriller
August:	<i>The Last Suit</i>	2018 Argentinian drama
September:	<i>The Crying Game</i>	1992 British-Irish thriller
October:	<i>The Grapes of Wrath</i>	1940 American drama
November:	<i>The Secret in their Eyes</i>	2009 Spanish-Argentinian crime drama
December:	<i>What's Up Doc?</i>	1972 American comedy

2019 CHRISTMAS DINNER

We will be having our annual Christmas dinner at **6 PM** on **December 10** at the Upper Yarra Arts Centre in **Warburton**, and **December 17** at the Healesville Memorial Hall in **Healesville**.

Entry is **\$10**, and you are strongly advised to book ahead. You can book ahead via email and pay at the dinner.

Bookings are **closed** for the *Warburton dinner*, as it is **fully booked**.

The booking contact for the **Healesville** dinner is below:

Healesville dinner:

17 December

lorrainesorrell@yahoo.com.au

The *booking deadline* is the Friday before each dinner: **6 December** for *Warburton* and **13 December** for *Healesville*. Booking is closed for the Warburton dinner.

Members will be able to renew their membership at the dinner, or in February at our first 2020 screenings. **EFTPOS** for membership renewal will be available at both dinners and at the February screenings.

Healesville members are encouraged to bring your own plates and cutlery, and since there are no facilities for you to wash your dishes/cutlery, you are advised to bring a bag to carry them home in.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Regular:	\$70
Concession:	\$65
Youth Membership (Under 25):	\$35

You can renew your membership at the December or February screenings.

FILM SOCIETY DVD LIBRARY

There will be no DVD rentals at the December screenings, and you are urged to return any outstanding DVDs before the end of the year.

2020 HEALESVILLE MINI FILM FESTIVAL – PROGRAM AND LUNCH

We have assembled an exciting trio of acclaimed French films for next year's Healesville Mini Film Festival, which will be held on Sunday the 15th of March 2020.

2020 HEALESVILLE MINI FILM FESTIVAL - 15 March 2020

9:45 am	<i>Custody</i>	2017	93 mins (approx.)	Rated M
1:00 pm	<i>Who You Think I Am</i>	2019	101 mins (approx.)	Rated MA15+
3:15 pm	<i>Just To Be Sure</i>	2017	100 mins (approx.)	Rated M

The event will have a lavish French-themed lunch catered by Susanna Luebbers Catering, with a maximum of 30 seats/diners.

You are required to book ahead if you want to attend the lunch.

Booking details and the exact time for the lunch will be provided in future issues.

STAR RATINGS AND REVIEW FOR *ELLIPSIS*



2.6 from Healesville

2.7 from Warburton's viewers

2.65 overall

My rating: **3 out of 5**

Ellipsis is a charming but very lightweight Australian drama with a pronounced lack of tension.

The film follows Viv (Emily Barclay) and Jasper (Benedict Samuel), two strangers who run into each other by chance in crowded Sydney, then hang out and bond across an adventure-filled night.

The mostly-improved dialogue feels authentic, and the leads have instant chemistry. The editing flows smoothly and the cinematography showcases the diverse attractions and quirky people of Sydney at night. The film has a languid, comfortable vibe, but a subplot focused on a phone technician, as he slowly repairs Viv's broken phone, effectively contrasts the lively banality of Viv and Jasper's night out with the quiet importance and dignity of the technician's life, as he struggles to balance his job with his duty to his family.

I also really appreciate *Ellipsis* for celebrating close, platonic friendship between men and women, which is rare in mainstream film. During their adventure through the city, there is no overt sense of romantic attraction between them, but they make each other laugh and show interest in each other's life stories, they clearly enjoy each other's company and look out for each other. Viv giving Jasper her number at the end may seem like a loaded gesture, but to me it simply suggests that she wants him to stay in touch and for them to remain friends.

So many men still believe that men and women can't be friends, as they think there will always be a sexual dimension when men and women are together. This assumption is total bullshit, and stems from a misogynistic mentality of treating women as sexual objects.

As such, it was wonderful to see *Ellipsis* straightforwardly depict a close, respectful bond – even a platonic love – between a man and a woman.

The main narrative issue with *Ellipsis* is its lack of dramatic tension.

Tension, as a storytelling tool, is generally associated with horror, action and thrillers, but tension is just a sense of anticipation generated by a narrative, and the focus of this anticipation can be good or bad. Simply put, tension is the anticipation of something big happening, whether it's the slasher villain finally pouncing, the on-and-off romance leads finally getting together, or the landing of a great punchline.

Ellipsis had several plot elements that could have generated tension, only to be ignored.

Jasper and Viv must be relatively wealthy, and near-impervious to alcohol, if they can drink all night and liberally tip the male dancers in a nightclub, but money or inebriation never come up. There are some allusions to relationship trouble between Viv and her unseen fiancé, but this is a fairly incidental detail. Viv and Jasper get separated, but quickly find each other again. I was convinced that the odd Eastern European woman they meet was a pickpocket, as she may have been distracting them so that she could steal their wallets, but this just turns out to be a weird, benign encounter with a pleasant stranger.

“Benign” is the operative word: the events in *Ellipsis*'s plot are a little too benign to be engaging.

A fellow Society member also pointed out a couple of plot-holes. The mowhawked dancer with the prosthetic leg tells Viv that Jasper already left the bar, and yet Jasper tells her when they reunite that the mowhawked dancer claimed she'd already left. These statements contradict each other (or the dancer was lying). It also feels contrived that the owner of that lost dog would have forgotten his dog at the beach after travelling such a long distance to his workplace.

Ellipsis is an endearing, genuine film that celebrates friendship between men and women, but has some contrived moments and a general lack of tension.

A VERY LAURIE CHRISTMAS: ROBOT MONSTER REVIEW



Robot Monster is a 1953 science fiction B-movie directed by Phil Tucker.

While not as popular or well-known as *Plan 9 From Outer Space*, *The Room* or *Birdemic: Shock and Terror*, *Robot Monster* is still a celebrated bad movie, with fans who delight in how corny and laughably inept it is.

The film takes place after a vague apocalypse instigated by the alien Ro-Man, whose iconic design consists of a gorilla suit with an opaque diving helmet on its head. Only eight people remain on Earth, and Ro-Man must destroy them to complete his mission.

Despite the 62-minute run-time (more like 59 minutes after the opening credits), *Robot Monster* is a slow, meandering film with an overwhelmingly flat tone.

The performances are functional and occasionally convey pathos, but the human characters are generally far too bright and relaxed for their dire situation.

The plot attempts some suspense through Ro-Man's intimidating video calls and the human survivors' efforts to send a protective serum to soldiers on a space-station, but Ro-Man can never find their hideout and the film quickly discards the serum subplot, draining it of tension.

Ro-Man is not a plausible world-destroying force, given how easily the human family shielded themselves from his death-ray, and the notion of the grandfather's disease-curing serum rendering them invulnerable to the death-ray is ridiculous.

Robot Monster uses sparse, bland outdoor shooting, and draws heavily upon stock footage from earlier special effects-based films (including a baffling scene of dinosaurs fighting, lifted from 1940's *One Million BC*).

The only aspect of *Robot Monster* with any genuine suspense is Ro-Man's story. Ro-Man has a rough deadline for killing the remaining humans, and faces mounting frustration from his superior, the Great Guidance Ro-Man. When Ro-Man becomes attracted to Alice (Claudia Barrett), the family's beautiful older daughter, there is a distinct sense of internal conflict as he resists his commands and grapples with his newfound emotions.

Ro-Man also delivers a legitimately good monologue: 'I cannot – yet I must. How do you calculate that? At what point on the graph do “must” and “cannot” meet? Yet I must – but I cannot.'

If you edit out most of *Robot Monster*'s human material, you may be able to make a decent short film about Ro-Man.

The film indicates that Ro-Man pre-emptively attacked Earth to prevent us from advancing enough to attack Ro-Man's people, which echoes the era's nuclear anxieties. The film's premise is superficially reminiscent of Harlan Ellison's famous 1967 science fiction horror short story *I Have No Mouth, And I Must Scream*, in which the malevolent supercomputer AM endlessly torments the last five human survivors after an apocalypse it orchestrated. Ro-Man's stilted yet grandiose manner of speech reminded me slightly of

the robot Box from the 1976 film *Logan's Run*.

Robot Monster is an exceedingly incompetent movie with a mildly engaging core in Ro-Man, and since it's so short and insubstantial, it isn't as fun (or funny) as most so-bad-it's-good movies.

Plan 9 From Outer Space aims high, with alien invaders reanimating the dead, and executes its own (terrible) special effects.

Troll 2 is full of wooden acting, contrived dialogue and ludicrous scenes.

Battlefield Earth features a deliciously hammy and strangely intimidating lead villain performance from John Travolta.

The Room is an elaborate melodrama with poorly-defined characters, several plot-threads that go nowhere and an almost alien level of awkwardness, and it's drenched in writer-director-producer-star Tommy Wiseau's ego.

Birdemic: Shock and Terror is half a tepid romance, half a *The Birds* knockoff, and all choppy and terribly-acted (and has that infamous scene of the heroes waving coat-hangers at stiff gifs of attacking birds).

Robot Monster doesn't have nearly as much merit, as a movie and as a bad movie, as these other bad movies.

Even so, I enjoyed watching *Robot Monster*, and I'm grateful to my friend Laurie for letting me borrow it.

DECEMBER'S SCREENING

Local Hero

1983 British comedy-drama

Rated PG

111 minutes (approx.)



A funny but poignant film about corporate greed and small-town resilience, this film also contains a small role from a certain future Doctor...

WARBURTON SCREENING: Tuesday December 10

HEALESVILLE SCREENING: Tuesday December 17

FEBRUARY'S SCREENING

The Hundred-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out of the Window and Disappeared

2013 Swedish comedy

Rated PG

111 minutes (approx.)

WARBURTON SCREENING: Tuesday February 11

HEALESVILLE SCREENING: Tuesday February 18