



## FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER

Hello to all our members,

It's a brand new year, and an auspicious one according to pop culture.

Before long, we should be seeing bio-engineered slaves evading elite cops in Los Angeles (*Blade Runner*), criminals fighting to the death on live TV for our amusement (*The Running Man*), vampire society reaching a critical blood shortage (*Daybreakers*) and a biker gaining terrifying telekinetic abilities in Tokyo (*Akira*).

This newsletter issue contains some important admin notices regarding membership renewal and the DVD library. This issue also marks the debut of a new segment I'm calling Alternative Film Spotlight, in which I discuss exciting and stylish works of filmmaking from places you might not expect.

This time, I've placed Fritz's poem after the star ratings and my review of December's film, as Fritz's charming poem should serve as a soothing remedy after my inflamed opinions on *Mon Oncle*.

### REMINDER: MEMBERSHIP FEES:

These are the membership fees for 2019:

<b>Full:</b>	\$70.00
<b>Concession:</b>	\$65.00
<b>Youth (under 25):</b>	\$35.00

If you haven't renewed your membership already, you can renew it at our February screenings (at both venues). EFTPOS facilities will be available.

You can also renew your membership over the counter at the Healesville and Warburton halls before these dates, with an additional \$2.50 surcharge.

### DVD LIBRARIES, HEALESVILLE AND WarBURTON

We are considering new options for the DVD library, to make hiring easier for our members and transportation easier for the poor curators.

We will likely be using a catalogue system in future, from which members can reserve available films they want to borrow, then pick them up at the following month's screening.

The DVD library will run out of the standard table/bag set-up, as normal, for the February screening (*The Country Doctor*).

## STAR RATINGS AND REVIEW FOR *MON ONCLE*



3.3 from Healesville's viewers

3.3 from Warburton's viewers

3.3 overall

Much of December's audience love *Mon Oncle*, and I'm glad they enjoy it so much, but I'm afraid I hated it. I found *Mon Oncle* a terribly inane and tedious comedy.

I appreciate director and star Jacques Tati's Chaplin-esque physicality as Monsieur Hulot, and I respect Tati's efforts toward commentary on consumerism and modern technology. A certain scene later in the film, with two peeking heads looking out of lit circular windows, giving the impression of eyes tracking Hulot through the courtyard, is also a truly brilliant sight-gag.

But Hulot has no personality beyond surface-level quirks, and he comes across as a pleasant yet incompetent idiot who I can't invest myself in. Two major sub-plots, namely Hulot's new job with a plastic hose manufacturer and his sister Madame Arpel trying to set him up with an eccentric neighbour, are established but go nowhere.

Hulot gets along with his young nephew Gerard and his school-friends better than the rest of his family, as he shares the kids' carefree nature, and their boisterous play in the countryside is clearly intended as a counterpoint to Gerard's drab, subdued life at home. However, these children are inconsiderate brats who enjoy playing hurtful pranks on strangers.

Gerard's home-life may be somewhat flat and stilted, which implies that he may enter a stereotypically stuffy profession such as law or medicine (or become a business executive like his father), but his family are well-off, clearly love him and have an active social life with people their own age (unlike Hulot).

There are some mildly amusing moments involving a pointless fountain and Madame Arpel's absurdly complicated modern kitchen system, but Tati's commentary on the soullessness of modern consumerist society falls flat, as who the hell am I to judge the Arpel family's mildly farcical yet functional and overall pretty **ordinary** way of life?

Beyond the sloppy social commentary, the film drags along across two unnecessary hours, and has so many jokes that are either too obvious or stretched out far too long (or both) to be funny. Like I observed frequently and vehemently after Healesville's screening, that gag involving an addled street-sweeper who never starts his job is attempted five times but never lands.

The film ends on a whimper, with Hulot sent under murky pretences to some job far away, while Gerard's father Monsieur Arpel indulges in one of his son's whistle-lamp pranks, in which he tricks a random person into walking into a lamp-post. This might be viewed as a gratifying moment of bonding between father and son, in which father becomes a bit more relaxed and playful like son, but it's still a pretty shitty prank to pull on someone, so Tati still fails in his muddled social commentary.

*Mon Oncle* is admirable yet wrong-headed, tedious and boring, and I considered it to be the worst film we screened last year.

At this point, I feel like Sam Neill in *Event Horizon*, blood pouring out of his empty eye-sockets.

"Do you see? **Do you see?**"

## FRITZ'S POEM

*Mon Oncle*

Dec 2018

Jacques Tati's "Mon Oncle", the film in December,  
A hilarious reflection with scenes to remember.  
A glance at life with progress and change,  
Human nature and behaviour quite strange.  
The film quite old, but so relevant today,  
With technology forever changing the way  
We do our chores and we interact  
And lose touch with reality as a matter of fact.  
Yet there is still hope of a future bright  
And that everything will be all right.  
So Film Society, I'm thanking you,  
Next year is something to look forward to.



F.R.

And on that note...

## FEBRUARY'S SCREENING

*The Country Doctor*

2016 French comedy film

Rated M

102 minutes (approx.)

Directed by real-life doctor Thomas Litli, this is a sensitive comedy drama about a grumpy yet respected rural doctor who reluctantly takes on a protege after he is diagnosed with brain cancer.

**WARBURTON SCREENING:** Tuesday February 12

**HEALESVILLE SCREENING:** Tuesday February 19

## MARCH'S SCREENING

### *The Death of Stalin*

2017 British-French comedy      Rated MA15+      107 minutes (approx.)

(Incidentally, *The Death of Stalin* was #9 on my Best Films of 2018 list)

**WARBURTON SCREENING:**    Tuesday March 12

**HEALESVILLE SCREENING:**   Tuesday March 19

## THE HEALESVILLE MINI FILM FESTIVAL

Our fifth annual Healesville Mini Film Festival will showcase three famous films by renowned Japanese director Akira Kurosawa. Each stars fearsome leading man Toshiro Mifune and features Kurosawa's innovative style and acute sense for drama and action.

**Yojimbo** sees Sanjuro, a crafty ronin, manipulate two rival crime lords into open conflict, as each tries to hire him as a bodyguard.

**Sanjuro** has the ronin return to help a young man rescue his uncle from wrongful imprisonment.

**Rashomon** is structured around the conflicting and self-serving accounts of a bandit, a bride, a ghost and a woodcutter regarding a tragic rape and murder.



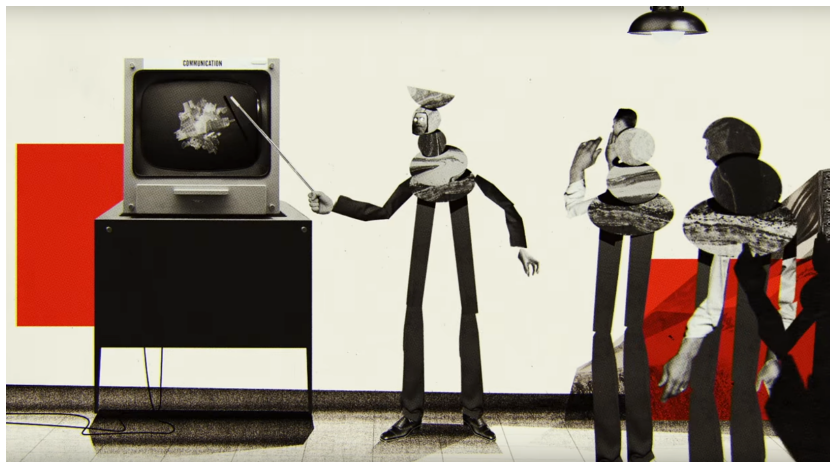
### Sunday March 3 2019

9:45 am: *Yojimbo*      (1961, M, 110 mins)

1:10 pm: *Sanjuro*      (1962, PG, 95 mins)

3:15 pm: *Rashomon*   (1950, PG, 88 mins)

## ALTERNATIVE FILM SPOTLIGHT



### *Clandestiny*

Music video

Directed by BlinkMyBrain (Ariel Costa)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5a8442i-X6A>

Mastodon is an American heavy metal band, founded in Georgia in 2000. They have a robust, energetic sound, and combine clean yet soulful vocals with heavy, intricate instrumentation. Their music has a distinct prog-rock feel to it, as several of their albums are element-focused concept albums, and their songs are often richly-structured, evocative and engage with intriguing themes.

Mastodon has always had surreal, creative music videos to match their vibrant music, from the smell-focused cult and '70s-style psychedelic animation in *Steambreather* to the *Solaris*-like scenario of a space-station haunted by visions in *Oblivion*, the Jim Henson-esque dark puppet world in *Asleep in the Deep*, Death as an inept office worker in *Show Yourself* and the joyful booty-filled nonsense of *The Motherlode*.

The music video for *Clandestiny*, which is from their 2017 album *Emperor of Sand*, may be their most unique and striking video.

On the orders of a Teddy Roosevelt-like Emperor, a scientist oversees the creation of a robot known as “The Pilot”. But the Pilot quickly goes brutally haywire, revealing the Emperor's nefarious motives.

*Clandestiny* pays tribute to silent movies, with title cards instead of diegetic spoken dialogue and a colour palette of black, white and macabre splashes of red. The blocky character designs are reminiscent of early Eastern European animation, and the faces resemble cut-outs from old newspapers.

The juxtaposition of antiquated presentation with a more modern genre (killer-robot sci-fi), abstract art style and splashes of violence is very bizarre and amusing, and the frantic escalating tension in the music video matches the ever-more-intense audio of the song.

Mastodon is one of my favourite bands, and if you check them out, I hope you enjoy this music video and their overall music output.