



## NOVEMBER 2020 NEWSLETTER

Hello to all our members,

Here is a brief statement from Vivienne Bond, our President:

At the time of writing, we have no details about when our venues will be opening or under what conditions. As soon as we know, you will be informed.

At this stage, we are hoping to commence screenings early in the new year. We are also hoping to run film festivals in 2021, but they will need to be in a pared-down version and their structure will also depend on any restrictions.

The Yarra Ranges Film Society Annual General Meeting was held on November 10 via Zoom. Thank you to all who attended, particularly non-committee members.

During the meeting, the decision to roll over all current memberships into 2021 was formalised.

The committee for 2021 was elected as follows:

<b>President:</b>	Vivienne Bond
<b>Vice-President:</b>	Keith Wade
<b>Secretary:</b>	Bea Wicks-Kaandorp
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Laurie Hastings
<b>General Committee Members:</b>	Sally Ahern
	Maggie Sail
	Meredith Smith
	Lavinia McEwan
	Tom Weber
	Seth Hynes
	Maria Lorenc
	Julian Warren
	Rebecca Bowman

Should you wish to borrow from our DVD library, you can find the catalogue on our website ([www.yarrarangesfilmsociety.org.au](http://www.yarrarangesfilmsociety.org.au)). Contact Jim at [j.cluberton@bigpond.com](mailto:j.cluberton@bigpond.com) to borrow from the Warburton DVD library and Lorraine at [lorrainesorrell@yahoo.com.au](mailto:lorrainesorrell@yahoo.com.au) to borrow from the Healesville DVD library.

**Vivienne Bond**  
**President**

Cinemas have reopened in Victoria!

Across the state, cinema businesses are running again, now with hand sanitiser stations, compulsory mask-wearing and strict density limits.

As a film critic, I was thrilled to see cinemas reopening, and over the past couple of weeks I saw two films I'd been eagerly awaiting for much of the year: *Bill and Ted 3* and *Tenet*.

*Bill and Ted Face The Music* is a messy but charming and surprisingly poignant sci-fi comedy, and is both a tribute and soft reboot of the first two films.

Bill (Alex Winter) and Ted (Keanu Reeves) must complete their world-unifying song before time collapses, and decide to steal the already-completed song from their future selves. This plan of time-travel plagiarism reflects their lack of responsibility in their adult lives, and as they meet dark or depressing future versions of themselves, Bill and Ted steadily mature as people, come to fully support their respective families, and mend

their relationship with estranged band member Death (William Sadler).

Meanwhile, their respective daughters, Billie (Samara Weaving) and Thea (Brigitte Lundy-Paine), gather legendary musicians from history, in a more formulaic (but still incredibly fun) retread of the first film. Weaving and Lundy-Paine are a lively, commanding duo, and both do an excellent job of emulating Winter and Reeves' respective personae (Lundy-Paine especially).

The steady unravelling of time provides a clear sense of urgency and plenty of amusing anachronistic imagery.

The resolution makes little sense, but it's so joyous and triumphant, with grand prog-rock-style music bringing all of humanity together through history, that the vague hand-wavey resolution really doesn't matter.

Kelly (Kristen Schaal) is an endearing character, but serves little narrative purpose beyond getting the plot in motion. The future antagonists are half-baked and superfluous, and Anthony Carrigan delivers some amusing but slightly forced comic relief.

*Bill and Ted Face The Music* is a sloppy but fun and heartwarming film, and the better of the two time travel-oriented films to come out in Victoria this month.

Back in June (in the United States and some other regions), *Tenet* became the first major cinema release during the Covid pandemic.

Some commentators viewed *Tenet* as the film on which the cinema industry will live or die. While this may be an extreme perspective, the fact that *Tenet*, a \$200 million blockbuster directed by acclaimed auteur Christopher Nolan, isn't very good doesn't bode well for the continued viability of big movies in cinemas.

*Tenet* follows an unnamed elite agent (John David Washington) as he uses the reversal of time to thwart Sator (Kenneth Branagh), a Russian arms dealer, and prevent the end of the world.

As with much of Nolan's filmography, *Tenet* is superbly-produced (but with a couple of glaring exceptions).

The elaborate action sequences are tense and well-composed, the cinematography is elegant and precise, Ludwig Göransson's grand electronic-tinged score makes clever use of reversed sound effects, and the film culminates in a confusing but visually-spectacular battle with terrain and buildings blowing apart and reforming and combatants moving forward and backward in time (although it's rather unclear who they're even shooting at).

The two aforementioned exceptions are some very abrupt editing, which disorients the viewer by skipping too much time and space, and the very muffled sound mixing.

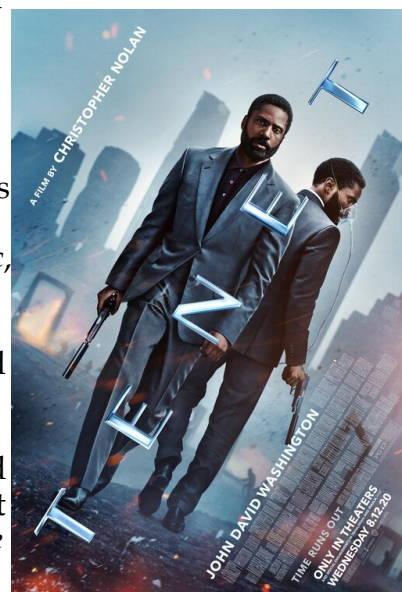
As with much of Nolan's filmography, and especially his more recent work such as *Inception*, *Interstellar* and *Dunkirk*, *Tenet* is convoluted and emotionally cold.

The performances feel authentic but the dialogue is heavy-handed and full of exposition, giving the film a dry, clinical feel.

"Macguffins" are narrative devices that move the plot forward but have little or no importance in themselves. Some famous examples include the glowing briefcase in *Pulp Fiction*, the Infinity Stones in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, the Heart of the Ocean necklace in *Titanic*, and the phrase "Rosebud" in *Citizen Kane*.

*Tenet* is full of Macguffins, from a Goya drawing to a plutonium shipment to a nebulous device called "the Algorithm", and Nolan's heavy reliance on physical objects to drive the plot feels detached and lazy.

Kat (Elizabeth Debicki), a mysterious woman whose son is held hostage by Sator, provides the plot's primary personal motivation, but Debicki's role in *Tenet* reminded me of Isabella Rossellini's role in *Blue Velvet* (and that's **not** a compliment).



The great American film critic Roger Ebert praised Rossellini's performance in Lynch's 1986 surreal crime drama as 'convincing and courageous', but derided the role she was given, as she is 'degraded, slapped around, humiliated and undressed in front of the camera. And when you ask an actress to endure these experiences, you should keep your side of the bargain by putting her in an important film.'



Kat suffers a gratuitous degree of abuse and victimisation, with so much of the plot moved forward by her physical or emotional suffering.

When you ask an actress to endure these experiences, you should keep your side of the bargain by putting her in a more coherent film.

*Tenet* makes only cursory use of its time-reversal gimmick. Even as the main characters grapple with "inverted" opponents moving backward through time, the visual result is just another conventional (if well-made) fight scene or car chase. To most viewers, a car speeding backward in time doesn't read any differently from a car driving backwards while moving forward in time (I hope that made sense).

Much of the plot feels needlessly complicated – especially the final battle sequence – and the film dwells just enough on its time-manipulation rules to highlight how little sense they make in practice. Other time travel thrillers such as *Timecrimes* and *Looper* avoid explaining how their time travel works, instead delivering a focused, dramatic story.

*Tenet* is well-produced but hollow and convoluted, and while it isn't the worst film of the year by a long shot (seventeen films ranked lower on my list of this year's films), *Tenet* might be my biggest film disappointment of 2020.

Cheers.  
**Seth**