

# FILM REVIEWS



knife. With the help of his friend, they abandon the body in a taxi and run home. As Joe tries to explain what happened to his sister Rosie, she starts having visions about the victim's demise.

Shot in that grimy urban style favoured by British filmmakers, *CRACKED EGGS* is described as a very black comedy, but it is just as much a drama with comedic and surreal moments. Jared Harris and Carol Starks are both excellent as the unhinged siblings Joe and Rosie, as is Jonathan McGuinness as Joe's twitchy, paranoid friend. The off-kilter dialogue is made believable by the trio's performances, with the director managing to pack plenty of visual, dramatic and comedic twists into such a short space of time.

The short is currently doing the festival circuit. The writer and director have secured backing for a feature on the strength of this film.

## DOC: *Sharkwater* (Rob Stewart)

*Review by Greg Pittard*

Every so often there is a film that spits you out of the cinema feeling much more informed on a subject and in rare cases even moves you to tears. Even rarer are films that change your entire perspective on the world. *Sharkwater* is one of the latter.

Rob Stewart is passionate about sharks; about their habits, their history and most of all their wellbeing. Opening with some truly stunning photography of a school of hammerheads, Stewart narrates the history of the human fear of the shark, dismissing it as folklore, and revealing that you're about as likely to be killed by an elephant as you are a shark.

Over footage of boasting shark hunters, Stewart denounces the resulting public hysteria and puts forward the potential threat that shark killing could have on the ocean's ecosystem. Stewart and his followers battle the Costa Rican government and coast guard with machine guns in an eye opening account of human ignorance.

Cross-cutting scenes of the harrowing cruelty of shark finning with arresting film of Stewart freely caressing sharks, *Sharkwater* compels you to take action with the alarming statistic that 90% of the world's shark population has been wiped out in the past few decades. Stewart's stirring picture of these ancient kings of the ocean, defies you not to be moved and Stewart himself stands out as an individual who has gone to courageous lengths to bring to the world's attention, a paramount ethical danger.

*Sharkwater* is being released internationally this autumn. For updates and more information please visit [www.sharkwater.com/screenings.htm](http://www.sharkwater.com/screenings.htm)

## SHORT: *Cracked Eggs* (Eric Loren)

*Review by Chris Patmore*

In general, drug use is never glamorised in movies. Seventies hippie duo Cheech & Chong may have used it for comic effect but most other films, from the 50's classic *THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN ARM* to recent movies such as *TRAINSPOTTING* and *REQUIEM FOR A DREAM*, show that drug use eventually leads to madness and even death. Although this moral viewpoint should be admired, Hollywood's promotion of cigarettes and alcohol has probably caused more damage than all of the world's drug use combined.

*CRACKED EGGS*, written by Steve Jones, directed by actor Eric Loren and produced by Notting Hill Films, follows suit, maintaining the view that drug usage leads to madness and death, but condenses it into a 12-minute film.

Drug dealer Joe's latest deal goes horribly wrong when his drug infuelled perception of his customer changes and he attacks him with a



## FEATURE: *In Search of a Midnight Kiss* (Alex Holdridge)

*Review by Chris Patmore*

Broke and alone on New Year's Eve, Wilson (Scoot McNairy – *BOBBY*, *ART SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL*) just wants to spend the rest of a very bad year in bed. But when his best friend convinces him to post a personal ad online, he meets a woman (Sara Simmonds) determined to find the right guy to be with at midnight. With just hours to go and the promise of a fresh start,





they take off on a bittersweet journey through the streets of Los Angeles.

Written and directed by Alex Holdridge, this is a Generation X take on what can best be described as walkie-talkie romantic movies, such as Linklater's *BEFORE SUNRISE/SUNSET* and Julie Delpy's latest, *TWO DAYS IN PARIS*. Holdridge, who coincidentally hails from Linklater's hometown of Austin Texas, shot the movie guerilla-style on HDV, converting it to black and white, to give the film an earthy look reminiscent of Kevin Smith's *CLERKS*. The unfamiliar LA locations give it freshness, however, the film relies on its smart, funny script for its success rather than locations or cinematography. McNairy is perfect as the geeky Wilson, portraying a nice balance

## FEATURE: **Weirdsville**

(Alan Moyle)

*Review by Chris Patmore*

As already mentioned in the review of *CRACKED EGGS*, the life of a screen drug addict is often fraught with perils and usually ends in death. *WEIRDSVILLE*, from cult director Alan Moyle (*PUMP UP THE VOLUME*, *EMPIRE RECORDS*), definitely falls into that category but is portrayed with humour that borders on farce.

Royce (Wes Bentley) and Dexter (Scott Speedman) are two hopeless junkies (are there any other kind?) who make an unlikely pair of anti-heroes. Willem Wennekers' brilliant script gets them embroiled in a hilarious and highly

improbable comedy of errors, involving vindictive drug dealers, wannabe Satanists, a resurrection, a heist, mediaeval role-playing dwarves and millionaire hippies. To try and explain it any further than that would spoil the surprises, of which there are plenty. *WEIRDSVILLE* has the look and feel of a cult film, reminiscent of 80's films such as John Landis's *INTO THE NIGHT*. A big hit at **Slamdance, Edinburgh** and the opening night film at **Raindance**, its cult status will be assured once it hits the cinemas in November. If you thought the stoner humour of *KNOCKED UP* was funny, then this is one not to miss.

In cinemas from 16 November. To find out more information about the film and its release visit [www.weirdsville-the-movie.com](http://www.weirdsville-the-movie.com)



between broad comedy, (particularly in the opening scene), and pathos. Although it is ostensibly a romantic comedy, *IN SEARCH OF A MIDNIGHT KISS* is also a poignant film about loneliness and the frailty of relationships in the Facebook world of virtual friendships.

*IN SEARCH OF A MIDNIGHT KISS* was a hit at **Edinburgh, Raindance** and other film festivals whilst being heavily courted by distributors. For more news visit [www.insearchofamidnightkiss.com](http://www.insearchofamidnightkiss.com)

## DOC: **A Letter to Geldof**

(Ceri Dingle)

*Review by Alec Kingham*

This half-hour documentary by film-focused charity *WORLDwrite* is an exposé of anti-poverty campaigner Sir Bob Geldof's failure to bring development aid to an African community.

It follows the aftermath of Geldof's 2005 TV series and book, *Geldof in Africa*, and his fervent promises to implement African development programs. The film crew journeys to Bisease (pronounced Bissy Yassie), an impoverished city of 27,000 in Ghana where Geldof was inaugurated as Chief Development Officer, to see if he made good on his promise to invest in their cola nut farming operation and improve the city's limited sanitation and infrastructure. What we learn is that the



disappointed residents have been abandoned and no development aid is forthcoming.

Further allegations on Geldof's humanitarian helper persona are uncovered, including City Chief Nana Okofo Kwakora Gyan III's claim that Geldof failed to attend a proposed meeting to discuss Bisease's predicament. But although the message in *A Letter to Geldof* is succinct, there is limited footage of the alleged repeated attempts to contact Geldof for his explanation and scant coverage of the other issues arising out of poverty that affect Bisease. While a noble attempt in exposing questionable celebrity endorsement of aid in the third world, the documentary feels more like partisan filmmaking, and where it might publicly embarrass Geldof, it is unlikely to offer more than raised hopes to the Bisease community.

*A LETTER TO GELDOF* is available on DVD for £15 from the *WORLDwrite* website. For release information and more updates visit the official website [www.worldwrite.org.uk/lettertogeldof](http://www.worldwrite.org.uk/lettertogeldof).

# BOOKS

## London Film Location Guide

Simon R.H. James  
(Batsford Books, 2007, £14.99)

Review by Chris Patmore

As any estate agent, businessman or filmmaker will tell you, "Location is everything". They will also tell you that in London they come at a premium price. Guerrilla filmmaking aside, shooting feature films on the streets of London requires expensive permits, a police presence and the tactical logistics of a military operation. There is also the choice to make between using somewhere familiar or totally unique. Over the decades, London has featured as the setting for hundreds of films, and despite the frequent use of creative licence with the geography (28 WEEKS LATER's short journey from the Docklands to Regents Park by foot, for example) – Londoners love trying to spot the locations. So if you want to find a location in London for your next movie, Simon James's new book takes all the guesswork out. Dividing the metropolis into north, south, east and west, he then isolates the areas by postcode with indices for film titles and street names, to make referencing even easier. Over 750 films are also covered in the book accompanied by film stills and current photos of locations.

The book won't help you become a better filmmaker or assist in you securing locations, but it is a great resource if you want to make a movie that references other films. It will also make you geekily smart and a trivia wiz, which has got to be worth the cover price.

## The Wah-Wah Diaries

Richard E Grant  
(Picador, 2006, £7.99)

Review by Jake Horsley

For filmmakers, there's nothing more essential to success—and endurance—than a passionate belief in their material. Nothing else is likely to justify the months, maybe years, of headaches, frustration, and despair that most feature productions entail. The paradox is that, the more passionately you believe in the material, the more frustrating the process is likely to be. Richard E Grant's *The Wah-Wah Diaries* (an account of the making of his 2006 film, from conception to distribution) will interest anyone contemplating active duty in the film business. Grant jumped in at the deep-end, and his book is a rare account of how a filmmaker discovers the process and craft of filmmaking while caught up in the thick of it. Grant's uncertainty, frustration, exasperation and exhilaration are all on display; he takes the reader along for the ride and a rocky ride it is.

To be a successful film director it helps to be as ruthless and as cutthroat as the business you're in and it's hard to attribute such qualities to Grant. But what he lacks in grit and ruthlessness, he makes up for with his obvious passion, pragmatism and persistence. Grant has a permanent place in filmgoers' hearts for his acerbic, hilariously poignant

portrayal of the title character in *WITHNAIL AND I*, and at its best *The Wah-Wah Diaries* is as affable and endearing as the actor himself. Like Grant's earlier film diary, *With Nails*, this is a breezy read. Grant doesn't filter his thoughts or put much between himself and the reader; we are privy to the process, both external and internal, of a first time filmmaker cutting his teeth in the medium and dealing with incompetent producers, nightmarish bureaucracies and temperamental technology. Throughout the ordeal, Grant exhibits an impressive degree of aplomb, diplomacy and sarcasm and manages to turn a grueling, almost interminable struggle into a light and instructive (and cautionary) tale.

Grant writes with neither muss nor fuss. This is basically a personal diary made public (he seems to be writing for himself as much as posterity) but its informality is one of its strengths. The book communicates both the joy of creative collaboration and the pain of being caught up in an essentially soul-destroying business. Grant's personal stake in the material (the film was based on his childhood in Swaziland) is clearly what kept him focused and committed – and relatively clear-headed – throughout and enabled him to come through with both his soul and the movie intact. That he pulled it off is an impressive achievement; and that his account is as spirited and entertaining (and good-natured) as it is, is perhaps no less an accomplishment.

## Shakespeare on Film

Carolyn Jess-Cooke  
(Wallflower Short Cuts, 2007, £12.99)

Review by Chris Patmore

It is universally accepted that William Shakespeare was the world's greatest playwright. His works are still as popular today as they have ever been and with the constant re-imagining, remain fresh and exciting for new audiences. Adapting stage plays to the screen has never been easy, or always successful, but the sheer scope of Shakespeare's work has presented directors with plenty of material to test their mettle, without alienating the purists. Although modern audiences may struggle with Shakespearian language, writers and directors have also taken the core of the bard's plays to create films in the modern language.

*Shakespeare on Film* by Carolyn Jess-Cooke looks at all these aspects, from verbatim adaptations by the likes of Laurence Olivier and Kenneth Branagh to modern interpretations like Baz Luhrmann's and the Hollywood adaptation *TEN THINGS I HATE ABOUT YOU*. The book is written as a text book for film studies students and although it's not a light read, it isn't overly academic either, citing clear examples of popular films for example so as not to alienate the audience and making it easy to cross-reference.

This book will give the reader a new and concise appreciation of Shakespeare's work on the screen and the comprehensive filmography at the back of the book is a great guide to further exploration.

