

TEENAGE FLICKS

Week 9: Teenage Wasteland - Off kilter reflections of growing up, an exploration of darkness, fantasy and weird wonders

Pleasantville (1998)

Gary Ross

- Directed by Gary Ross
- Produced by Gary Ross, John Kilik, Robert J Degus and Steven Sodenbergh
- Written by Gary Ross
- Cinematography by John Lindley
- Edited by William Goldenberg
- Music by Randy Newman

Gary Ross

- Would become well versed in creating, either as director, writer or both, a certain kind of magical drama combining the teenage or adolescent experience with fantastic elements
- *Big* (1988) – magical wishes
- *Pleasantville* (1998) – transportation to a magical realm
- *The Hunger Games* (2012) - a fantasy dystopia

Pleasantville (1998)

Gary Ross

- The introduction of colour becomes metaphor for awakenings
- Sexual awakening
- Feminism
- Artistic temperament

"This movie is about the fact that personal repression gives rise to larger political oppression...That when we're afraid of certain things in ourselves or we're afraid of change, we project those fears on to other things, and a lot of very ugly social situations can develop."

Gary Ross

"Pleasantville is a morality tale concerning the values of contemporary suburban America by holding that social landscape up against both the Utopian and the dystopian visions of suburbia that emerged in the 1950s."

Robert Bueka
SuburbiaNation

- This was the first time a film was created by scanning and digitizing recorded film footage for the purpose of removing or manipulating colors

Donnie Darko (2001)

Richard Kelly

- Directed by Richard Kelly
- Produced by Sean McKittrick, Nancy Juvonen and Adam Fields
- Written by Richard Kelly
- Cinematography by Steven Poster
- Edited by Sam Bauer and Eric Strand
- Music by Michael Andrews

- Set in 1988
- Kelly was under pressure to create a contemporary piece but he struggled with the modern placement so stuck with the original idea
- Filmed over twenty-eight days, its shooting schedule mirrors the time which passes in the film
- Due to its release date being delayed due the September 11th attacks the film almost became a straight to VHS/DVD release
- Christopher Nolan was able to serve as advocate, persuading distributors Newmarket to release it in cinemas

The Opening Scene

- The camera tracks down a secluded path, it's dawn, a teenager wakes in the middle of the road
- The look, coupled with the rolls of thunder remind this is (in part) an indie horror film
- Dwarfed by the misty hillsides and landscape which surround him, the loneliness of his situation is underlined
- When his smile and not the expected panic comes, we know this boy is someone who perhaps dances to his own tune
- His bicycle ride back to suburbia combined with the use of The Killing Moon soundtrack lets us know Donnie's metaphorical journey ahead will be a strange one
- The switch between tracking shots and POV shots creates an air of mystery
- As Donnie reaches the street he lives on we receive images which provide us with an idea of the kinds of inhabitants that live there, the time of year; and there are also hints which tell us something might be slightly amiss
- It's nostalgically familiar yet creepily unfamiliar at the same time
- The film has a heart but presents a dark hue
- Its subject matter – time travel/strange dimensions etc. carved it out immediately as a cult film
- Mental health issue as taboo
- Looks at American suburban hypocrisies and explores the darkness below the 'respectable' surface

Lords of Chaos (2018)

Jonas Akerlund

- Directed by Jonas Akerlund
- Produced by Kwesi Dickson, Danny Gabai, Jim Czarnecki, Erik Gordon, Jack Arbuthnott and Kō Mori
- Screenplay by Dennis Magnusson and Jonas Åkerlund
- Based on *Lords of Chaos* by Michael Jenkins Moynihan and Didrik Söderlind
- Cinematography by Pär M. Ekberg
- Edited by Rickard Krantz
- Music by Sigur Rós

Jonas Akerlund

- Was drummer in Swedish black metal band Bathory
- He directed a video for fellow metal band Candlemass
- This led to more film work including commercials etc.
- He began to create promotional videos for host of other musical acts
- In 2002, he directed his first full length film *Spun*

Lords of Chaos (2018)

- 'Euronymous' (Rory Culkin) forms a black metal band (the first in Norway)
- After some initial membership changes they recruit a new singer from Sweden called 'Dead' (Jack Kilmer)
- The band begins to gain notoriety and success, however, their level of negative intensity and Dead's self-destructive tendencies starts to cause problems

- It's incredibly dark, yet also has a lot of heart, Culkin is a believable and (partly) likeable protagonist
- The passion behind the music portrayed by the characters is both disturbing and endearing
- Though laced with some incredibly horrible imagery, there is also a well-honed dark sense of humour
- Akerlund considered making the piece into a full-blown comedy
- The end result reads as a cross between *A Clockwork Orange* and *This is Spinal Tap*