



## TENDER MERCIES

Director: Bruce Beresford

A plot involving an alcoholic down-and-out country singer put back on his feet by the love of a young Baptist widow might, at first, seem the subject for the most banal of country ballads. Yet in Australian Beresford's first American film, this tale has been distilled into an exquisite film, as notable for its breathtaking Oklahoma visuals and brilliantly evocative use of colour, as it is for the immaculate ensemble playing of the cast.

*Tender Mercies* is Robert Duvall's first film since the 1981 *Pursuit of D.B. Cooper*. It has gained him an Academy Award — and rightfully so. This man, whom Pauline Kael once described as "a powerful, recessive actor" and "almost a genius at keeping himself in the background," gives a compelling performance. He can extract more eloquence out of the simple act of hoeing the garden after his daughter's death than some actors could from pages of script.

Although Duvall is very much at the centre of *Tender Mercies*,

one cannot but be impressed by Horton Foote's spare and laconic script, so perfectly complementing the film's stunning images of isolation. Also outstanding are Tess Harper as the young widow and Wilford Brimley as the gruff manager of Duvall's country-singer wife.

Another Australian currently working in America is Fred (Devil's Playground, *Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith*) Schepisi. His recently completed *Iceman* could be another film to watch out for.

## THE DRESSER

Director: Peter Yates

Like Willy Russell's *Educating Rita*, Ronald Harwood's *The Dresser* started its life as a West End success. Its vision, purportedly based on Sir Donald Wolfit, of an eccentric old actor touring a Shakespearian troupe around the provinces during wartime, was a pain to the indomitable human spirit as well as the fragile inter-relationships between the characters.

*The Dresser* has, I feel, been "opened up" more successfully than *Educating Rita*. Most of the scenes still revolve around the milieu of the theatre, whether they be in Sir's chaotic dressing-room or the introductions and tail-ends of various shaky stage performances. It is the tension between these that provide the anchor for the film.

Also at the core of *The Dresser* is the concept of theatricality which is brilliantly maintained in the transition to the screen. All the characters, with the exception of Eileen Atkins' harrassed stage manager, are resolutely larger-than-life. The theatre, at times, seems like a substitute for the wacky chateau in de Broca's *King of Hearts*. Albert Finney's Sir can stop an inconsiderate train with one well-aimed bellow, and his manner in the dressing-room is just as extrovert.

Even more daring is, Tom Courtenay's portrayal of Norman, Sir's prissy and protective dresser. For a while one feels that Courtenay is coming perilously close to caricature but, within the theatrical concept of the film, this is a perfectly gauged and delivered performance — one of the most moving to be seen for some time. William Dart

## Letters

Post to 'RIU' Letters, PO Box 5689, Auckland 1.

### Expert Opinion

This city must indeed be no more than a small-minded farming community, for the comments and relative comparisons used in your publication indicate an incestuous

nature among your small and cliquey group.

I appreciate criticism, we all need a measure to help us grow. But constructive criticism is a word best left for individuals with some knowledge of the subject they discuss and that just about counts you out.

Well, I'm off to another country where at least Kiss isn't the only band that can be related to as an attempt at musical professionalism. What a ridiculous comment, the likes of which I've come to expect from your so-called music magazine. Why don't you really do something for musicians in New Zealand and get into floral art.

Michel Morris (Auckland Walk)

### Some Moa

Dear Chris,

Wipe yours!!

Love,

The Moa Hunters Remuera

### A Prescription for Happiness

May I make a suggestion in regard to this Coco/deodorant affair? Mark Bell, Myx, The Plot Thickens and this Jenny person (who seems to be getting her fair share of love and sympathy) should get together over a large bottle of aftershave and sort out their differences. It seems there is so much fussing and fighting in the world, so why waste stamps and passion on what has turned into a non-issue? Please try and settle out of court.

Dr Leroy Rintack (MD)

Lower Hutt

### Drink Speights and Lose Your Musical Credibility

Having just listened to the Great Unwashed's latest double single, it prompted me to write that Dunedin bands are the most boring collection of talentless, self-indulgent "musicians" hyped up to a totally unrealistic level and should only be compared with their locally brewed beer, Speights — flat, tasteless, watered-down with sugar and bitterness added. REAL Music Lovers Christchurch PS: Flying Nun are a crock o' shit and the Double Happies are an extremely dull, unimaginative and unintelligent bunch of "musos". Suppose I can't interest you in one of the new Shayne Carter dolls, then ... RB



### West Street Mob

Breakdance — Electric Boogie 12" (RCA)

Okay, I know you've had just about as many songs about bopping as you can possibly take. But just wait a second — not only was this one of the first (it was released in the US last year), it's also one of the best. Superb studio techniques and a great gangster theme in the core of the song keep it hopping along nicely. Not sure about that vocoder though.

### The Smiths

This Charming Man (New York) 12" (Rough Trade)

Love 'em or hate 'em, there is no denying the strength of this song. That meaty Motown bassline will get you every time and with lines like "I would go out tonight / But I haven't got a stitch to wear," this charming hippie couldn't go wrong. Style Council

My Ever Changing Moods 12" (Polydor)

Cool Weller and Twit Talbot seem to be overdoing everything these days. They make pointless videos, write pathetic pseudo-intellectual hip garbage on the covers of their records and generally make prize prats of themselves. Fortunately they still make great singles and this one has to be single of the month. Makes you feel like you are somewhere else.

### Bananarama

Robert de Niro's Waiting (London)

No less than five songwriters worked on this one, including the Swain and Jolley team. For all that, the results are rather dim. Good hum-along chorus but precious little else. If the video's good expect a hit.

### Frank Sinatra

New York, New York (Reprise)

Nice tone on this chap's voice and I sort of like the sloppy big band feel. If he gets the right break he may even be the next big thing.

Icehouse Taking On the Town 12" (Regular)

Glam is on the way back and Iva Davies is taking no chances. If anyone is going to be Ziggy it's gonna be him.

Big Country Wonderland 12" (Mercury)

Yet another huge yawn from a band that rutted itself after only two singles. This one takes months to get going then limps through, propped up only by Steve Lilly-white's generous overproduction. A huge hit?

### Shalamar

Deadline USA 12" (MCA)

Part of a soundtrack belonging to DC Cab. Even Jellybean Benitez can't save this really naff song from its fate of accompanying endless dance sequences.

Mark Phillips

## Video



### The Making Of Thriller

If you're interested in Michael Jackson and you've got a VCR then you've already taped *Thriller* off air. So why hire *The Making of ...* documentary, especially when it's virtually what you'd expect. Because, along with all the standard stuff — oh you know: finding out why Michael chose John Landis as director, watching the werewolf make-up being applied, seeing the dancers rehearse, blah blah — there are a couple of very worthwhile bonuses. First is a sixties clip of the Jackson Five with a nine or 10 year-old Michael in superb voice. He had extraordinary presence even then. The second, taken from last year's Motown 25th Anniversary special, shows a live performance of 'Billie Jean' that is absolutely dazzling. While neither of these sequences is anything whatever to do with the making of *Thriller*, they alone make the hireage fee worthwhile. PT



Rock 'n' roll and down-home religion meet head-on in *FOOTLOOSE* the story of a teenager (KEVIN BACON, left) who moves to a small mid-west American town with his mother and finds an authoritarian minister (JOHN LITHGOW) squelching all youth culture in the town. He is ostracised by townspeople but finds himself in a relationship with the minister's daughter (LORI SINGER, right).



It had to happen — and it has. *BEAT STREET* is the first full-length breakdance movie. The storyline involves the friendship between three adolescent boys in South Bronx, but that's probably less important than the soundtrack, which is undeniably hot. It features new tracks from such as GRAND-MASTER MELLE MEL, ARTHUR BAKER, SYSTEM, AFRIKA BAMBAATA and JENNY BURTON.

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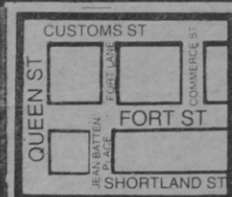
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