

MERRY CHRISTMAS MR LAWRENCE

Director: Nagisa Oshima
A novel by Sir Laurens van der
Post was the unlikely source of Oshima's latest film - a study of deprivation and power struggles within a Japanese POW camp. At first, David Bowie might seem just as eccentric a choice as its star, but Bowie's intelligence and animal magnetism serves him well in it. His cocky rebelliousness contrasts sharply with the more reasoned approach of Tom Conti's Lawrence and Jack Thompson's blustering Head of Command, showing as they do, three aspects of the English attitude to Japanese domination.

The Japanese contingent are sharply drawn too. On the one snarply drawn too. On the one hand there's the unpredictable machismo of the Captain, intro-ducing himself with a Shake-spearian quotation and treating the proceedings as if it were a Kabuki performance, on the othe there's the more simple-minded sadism of the Sergeant, his life and attitudes controlled by his fatalis-

tic superstitions.

The film is not without those bizarre touches one associates with Japanese cinema — seeing Auck-land's Railway Station used as a stand-in for Batavia is quite a jolt, too! It's dazzlingly shot, and nowhere more so than in the dream-like flashbacks to Bowie's boyhood in which the Japanese violence and persecution score is stunning — Japanese in essence but yet having much of the atmo-sphere of Bowie's music.

Merry Christmas is a major film by a major international director. Thanks to Bowie's association with it, we won't see the movie relegated to a few festival performances.

PATU

Director: Merata Mita

One can well imagine what a daunting task it must have been to collate all the film footage on this project, and Merata Mita's account of the 1981 tour debacle is a powerful vision of one of the darkest moments in our country's



Bowie and Sakamoto in 'Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence.

history.
The director's skill in choosing her images is what gives Patu its undoubted eloquence, the most memorable shots being those of an old woman watching timidly from her window as police and protesters tussle in the street. The aftermath of the fighting sees traces of blood in the puddles on the road. Diatribe's score is effective, with its recurring use of 'God Defend New Zealand' — sometimes in an New Zealand' - sometimes in an ironic fashion. Interviews with South Africans place New Zea-land's strife within a wider context and, throughout the film, Mita makes it clear that *Patu's* reverberations go far beyond those few months in 1981.

I've only two reservations: The flour-bombing of Eden Park to the accompaniment of Sibeliu's 'Karelia' is such a brilliant touch that I'm surprised humour wasn't used more in the film. And am I the only one who would have been grateful to have interviewees identified on the screen?

Director: Istvan Szabo

The various stages of the Rise and Fall of the Third Reich have spawned a number of fine movies over the last few decades, from Visconti's The Damned to Schlondorff's The Tin Drum. Szabo's Mephisto is the latest in the genre - derived from a Klaus Mann novel, it's the tale of an actor struggling to keep his head and career above water in the rising tide of Nazism.

At 140 minutes, Mephisto is hardly a short film but Szabo's

theatrical flair maintains the intensity throughout. All the characters are seen as actors in a kind of real-life theatre at the mercy of politics and history – none more so than Klaus Maria Brandauer's Höfgen, using Geothe's Mephistopheles character as an image of political expedi-

ency.

Brandauer's fine performance gives us an almost Brechtian Everyman, struggling for survival.

HEAT AND DUST

Director: James Ivory
Heat and Dust is an eloquent and nostalgic study of cultural interplay in Ivory's favourite setting — India. Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's script shows us two young English women, Olivia in the 1920s and her niece Anne in the 1980s, trying to come to terms with the pressures and problems of a new environment and its effects on their personalities and

There's much to praise in this film — Ivory's effortless handling of different chronological strands of the plot, Walter Lassally's evocative camera work and, above all, that wry and often quaint humour that is so much

part of the British Raj.

There are splendid performances throughout, but three are outstanding. Greta Scacchi, achieving a fine balance of the vulnerable and resolute as Olivia, Julie Christie, playing with her usual clear intelligence as Anne and Madhur Jaffrey as the Begum who, without speaking a word of English, almost steals the movie

with her flashing eyes, staccato Hindustani outbursts and flam-boyant cigarette holder.

FORTHCOMING FILMS

Return of the Jedi ... the third in the Star Wars series from George Lucas. Grossed over \$70m in its first two weeks of release in the USA. Dollars aside, it should be a helluva lotta fun. Starts Nov 25. The Man Who Saw Tomorrow ... a dramatised documentary on the a dramatised documentary on the prophecies of Nostradamus. Narrated deeply by Orson Welles.

Starts Nov 11. Hanky Panky...a romantic thriller starring Gene Wilder and Gilda Radner centred around the theft of top-secret computer tapes. Directed by Sidney Poitier and scored by Tom Scott. Starts Oct. The Tempest...a free adaptation of Shakespeare's comedy of the same name. A modern story of a man who flees a stormy Manhattan marriage to wander and dream. Starts Nov.

Phar Lap ... an Australian film about the Kiwi racehorse who about the KIWI racehorse who raced his way into the record books before he met a death shrouded in mystery. See Best Best for the full story. Start Dec 16.

The Man Who Wasn't There...another 3D movie, but this time a comedy. Steve Guttenberg (Diner) stars as a minor US state department official who becomes the subject of a national chase because he possesses a chemical which can make him invisible. Starts Nov

ACB NOW PR

From the still-warm ashes of A Certain Bar has risen a new, slightly different sound system

PR (taken from the initials of organisers, Patrick Waller and Ralph E. Boy) will be open at the DB Tavern on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. Its musical sweep will be wider than that of ACB, encompassing punk, funk, reggae 'n' rock. The bar has been bringing in guest DJs and live bands (first up will be the Gordons) will play periodically. Whatever, you'll still be able to

DEMO HELP UP TO \$750

The two-year old demo recording subsidy scheme run by the QEII Arts Council has been financially beefed up to make it a lot more useful.

The council can now offer up to \$750 (as opposed to \$200 previously) for the recording of tracks for a single or EP, thus giving performers a start to work from in the recording world. It won't quite be a lolly scramble, as the total annual budget is \$10,000.

The scheme will generally only be open to acts that have not released any records. An exception may be made if you can show your previous release cannot serve as a good demonstration of your as a good denionstration of your work. If interested, write to Brendan Smyth, PO Box 6040, Te Aro, Wellington, for application instructions, or ph 851-176. RB

NEW EXPONENT

Dance Exponents, soon to begin a national tour, have a new guitar-ist in 18-year-old Chris Sheehen.

Sheehen's addition brings the band back to its original two guitar lineup. Brian Jones had been the sole guitarist since Martin Morris (who in turn replaced founder member Steve "Fingers" Cowan) departed the band late

The Exponents were forced to return from Australia when singer Jordan Luck ran into work permit problems and now they'll be staying here to promote their debut album, Prayers Be Answered and will go back across the Tasman when the paperwork is straight-ened out. The first single, 'Know Your Own Heart' is out soon and the album follows in November.

The tour begins in Blenheim on October 24 and moves across Cook Strait in early November. Lots of new material has been promised. And look out for the Exponents on tour investigation in next month's RIU.

BOWIE SPECIAL NOV 'RIPITUP'

AWARDS FINALISTS

Nominations for the New Zealand Music Awards have been released. They include: Single of the Year: DD Smash 'Outlook for Thursday', Monte Video 'Shoop', Coconut Rough 'Sierra Leone'. Album: Herbs Light of the Parific Dance Eventual Prince of the Parific Dance of the Pa Pacific, Dance Exponents/Legion-naires Live At Mainstreet, DD Smash Live. Male Vocalist: Dave Dobbyn, Malcolm McNeill, Monte Video. Female Vocalist: Monte Video. Female Vocalist:
Trudi Green, Suzanne Prentice,
Patsy Riggir. Top Group: DD
Smash, Herbs, Narcs. Most Promising Group: Hip Singles,
Coconut Rough, Body Electric.
Promising Male Vocalist: Dick
Driver, Andrew Snoid, Gary
Smith (Body Electric). Promising
Female Vocalist: Rhondda Jones Female Vocalist: Rhondda Jones, Bronwyn Jones (Precious), Sonya Waters. Producer: Dave Dobbyn ('Outlook for Thursday'), Dave Marrett ('Sierra Leone'), Monte Video/Bruce Lynch ('Shoop Shoop'). Engineer: Dave Marrett ('Sierra Leone'), Graeme Mhyre (DD Smash Live), Paul Streekstra ('Outlook for Thursday'). Video of the Year: 'Outlook for Thursday' (Andrew Shaw), 'Sierra Leone' (Greg Rood), 'Shoop Shoop' (Mark Ackerman, Craig Howard).

CHANCE TO VOTE

The list of contenders for the Record Industry Awards "best single" section — the one decided by public vote — has been released and you should be hearing a selec-

tion on your local radio station. Of the 22 songs on the list, each station will select 10 for a montage to be played regularly, the intention being that the respective selections will reflect regional taste. Voting forms will be printed in the Listener, weeklies and RIU (page 14). 36). On the night, there will be live TV links to each region to pick up

results around the country.
The full list is: The Body Electric
Pulsing', Neighbours 'Only One
You Need', Precious 'Sympathy',
Eddie O'Strange 'Video Dodo',
Dennis O'Brien 'Julia', Mockers CONTINUED ON PAGE 12





