

FILM

SIGN OF THE TIMES

Director: Prince

Live in Rotterdam, Holland. The Prince extravaganza in wild abandon. Directed by the man himself, in a very sharp and direct style, at times looking hyper realist. Lots of smoke, lights and a floating plasma ball that links some segments. Fairly minimalist linkages, but it's the music that matters.

The best thing is that it sounds different from the album, with at times real different arrangements. The highlight is 'Hot Thing,' with a wool organ intro that's very Jimmy Smith. Then a groovier and funkier 'Hot Thing,' then the jazz breakdown, with the band breaking into Charlie Parker's 'Now's the Time.'

Prince knows how to work the stage, a series of costume changes, and a style learnt from James Brown and the whole history of black dance. Things get out of hand in 'Housequake,' with everyone cavorting around, especially Singer Cat.

Every song is perfect and different from the album, things are a lot more rock orientated. Sheila E is great on drums, with a deadly drum solo. Heaps of guitar as well; *Sign of the Times* has wild guitar all the way through it. Great sound is maintained throughout; Sheila E has post-production credits.

A very good "live" music film — sometimes these sort of things fail,

but Prince has kept things well paced and usually interesting. Those of you who haven't paid much attention to Prince, this film might be an eye-opener.

Kerry Buchanan

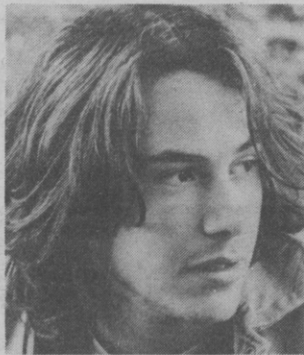
RIVER'S EDGE

Director: Tim Hunter

This is a strange and disturbing film. It's a movie that sets out to shock, and achieves its aims admirably. Murder, insanity, violence, drug abuse: these are all the prime material for the sensational. Put them in a teenage setting, how can they fail? Here is *The Bad Seed* updated for the cynical 80s, though Patty McCormack is a cherub compared with the sullen psychopath of Daniel Roebuck, who coldly murders his girlfriend and takes his friends back to view her naked body on the banks of the river.

What makes *River's Edge* so shattering is that it is such a well-made film. Production values are spot on, the script is tight, and performances are finely gauged. Crispin Glover's Layne is a brilliantly-drawn speed-freak, handling virtual monologues with the chutzpah of a Joan Rivers. Dennis Hopper is there too, to add another portrait to his gallery of latterday psychos — this time he's a one-legged murderer who lives in isolation with an inflatable Dutch doll and a hamper full of grass. As if we need reminding, his old *Easy Rider* cycle is there in one of his rooms.

What is lacking in *River's Edge*, until the last few reels of the film, is a moral stand. When it comes, its very swiftness and cursory treatment make one doubt its sincerity. Dennis Hopper's final words from his hospital



Keanu Reeves. *River's Edge*

bed give the impression of being in an interview situation — a form of distancing which contrasts sharply with the intimacy and immediacy of much of the film.

William Dart

D.O.A.

Directors: Rocky Morton & Annabel Jankel

Rudolph Mate's original film of *D.O.A.* screened on television here back in the 70s. I remember it impressed me, but details are blurred: the one thing that remains is the pre-credits sequence, with subjective camera, in which the doomed hero Edmond O'Brien lurches into the police station to declare himself murdered.

The 1988 version takes the premise of the original *film noir* and remodels it brilliantly. Charles Edward Pogue's script is inventive, with a flair for the bizarre and the ridiculous: it becomes, in part, an allegory on the

foolishness of academic pride — in the words of one character, a matter of "publish or perish." There's even a new twist to the sardonic Bogartian signing off-line: "Just somebody's homework that was all."

Rocky Morton and Annabel Jankel are best known as the creators of *Max Headroom*, "the world's first computerised television personality" and, with cameraman Yuri Neyman, they have created some brilliant moments: the camera hurtles around the distressed wife at an art gallery function, the kaleidoscopic colour effects when the mortally ill Dennis Quaid runs into a school function towards the end of the film. Colour is brilliantly handled, setting off in grainy black-and-white for the police station scene, with a dramatic shift to colour for Quaid's flashback. In the closing minutes the colour disintegrates gradually back to monochrome.

Dennis Quaid is marvellously feisty as the murdered academic whose writing career "didn't stop, it just stalled," although Meg Ryan's ingenuousness wears a little thin after a while. The villains are superb, including Charlotte Rampling, looking more and more like a seedy Bacall, and the smoothly sadistic Christopher Neame.

There are a few moments when the pace slackens — Quaid's flight from hospital, the obligatory love scene for Quaid and Ryan — but on the whole this is an intensely gripping film. It's also a film that demands theatrical viewing, so don't be tardy and wait for the video release.

William Dart

SOEMONE TO WATCH OVER ME

Director: Ridley Scott

Ridley Scott's a man who has always worn his style on his sleeve. His work has taken him back to 19th century Germany (*The Duellists*) and well into the future (*Blade Runner*, *Alien*). His new film finds him in New York in 1987, and the scene is set through the credits with a camera panning over a Big Apple skyline at night while Robert Flack croons the Gershwin standard.

Unfortunately Scott's material — concerning a fairly simple and ordinary cop assigned to guard a threatened socialite, and the effects that this relationship has on the cop's personal life — is rather thin. The camera gloats over the fineries of the lady's Manhattan penthouse in much the same way as it did over leafy glades in *The Duellists*, and the characters come a poor second.

The director uses music to point

out the social differences — Vivaldi and Irene Dunne for Mimi Rogers' socialite and Fine Young Cannibals for Tom Berenger's cop — but it's all too contrived. What survives from the film is almost solely due to Berenger's tough and vulnerable hero, and Lorraine Bracco's equally rounded portrayal of his suffering wife. Otherwise, one seeks recompense in the lush camerawork of Steven Poster and the opportunity to hear not one, but three versions of Gershwin's 'Someone to Watch Over Me.'

William Dart

Pagan Place

Trevor Reekie of Pagan Records sees the compilation *Pagan in a Pagan Land* as a celebration of what the label has achieved so far, and a rejuvenation of their catalogue as Pagan moves into a new era.

"The record gives the material another shot," he says. "A lot of the songs were one-off projects. A record like *This Boy Rob's* has been deleted but I wanted to see them on record in some form. Some of them are classic singles, like Jim & Joe's 'A Place to Hang His Hat,' but it only sold 150 copies, so it deserves another go. Primarily we've released it because we're proud of it."

Reekie might describe Pagan as "a slow starter" that was "received cynically" when it was set up in late 1985, but the label has since become highly respected for its diverse range of New Zealand music — and for the results it has achieved, a hit in Australia with Shona Laing, a No 1 here with Tex Pistol's 'Game of Love,' the Warratahs' long stay on the album charts, and now the Holidaymakers, who with any luck and justice should go to No 1 this week with 'Sweet Lovers.'

Originally set up as a subsidiary of Mirage Entertainment, with Mirage now in receivership, Pagan will continue as a separate entity owned by Reekie, who has come to an agreement to buy the com-

pany off the receivers. "We're fortunate that Pagan always acted as a satellite of Mirage — it had no debts, and always paid its way."

"We'll be starting at zero again, with just goodwill and artists' copyrights and royalties to come in. The only change is in the logistics of running the label."

If the EMI closure has any beneficial effect, it's that labels now develop and nurture local artists, says Reekie. One-off projects are not so feasible. "That's when a label has a right to be called a label. You stand by artists through bad and good. Our direction is now more defined. We have a stable of artists — the Warratahs have a second album coming up, Tex and This Boy Rob their debut LPs, and within 12 months possibly another Shona LP."

"The turning point for the label was definitely Shona cracking it. It's encouraging for local artists — usually a single lasts only 12 weeks, but to see a song like 'Kennedy' three-and-a-half years old and it's still going, it gives you hope. Someone might yet pick up on Jim & Joe."

Chris Bourke

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