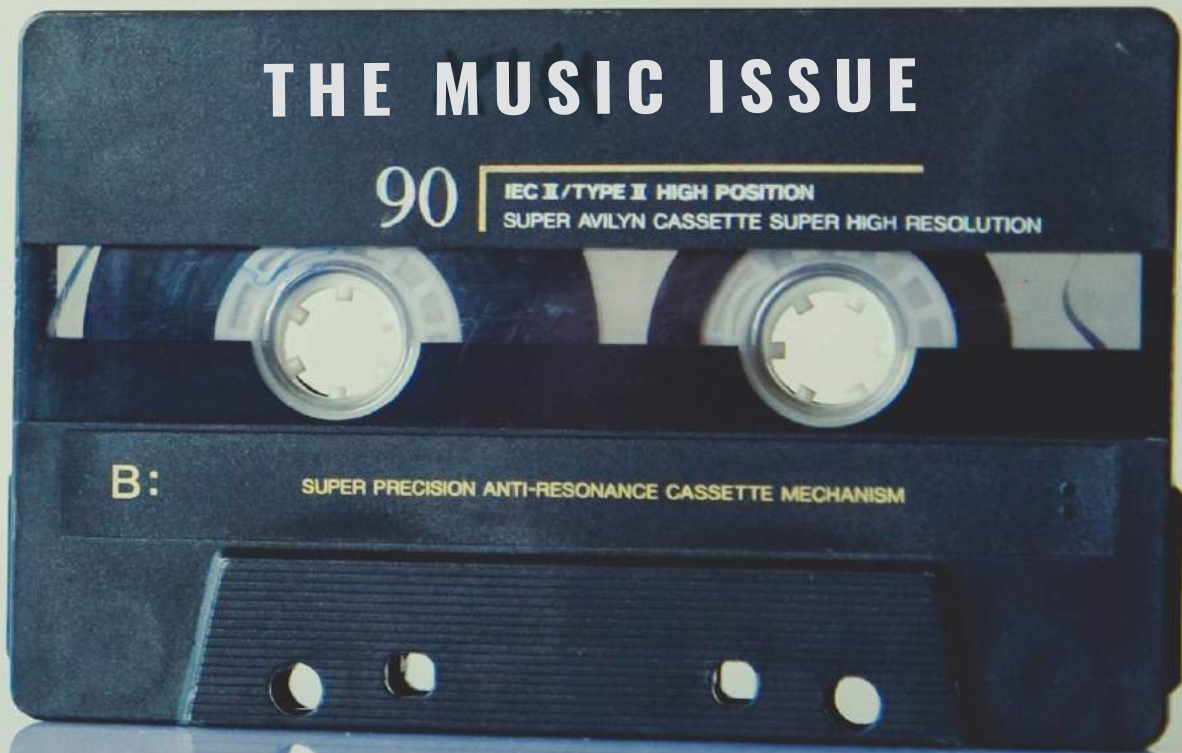


ISSUE #1 - MARCH 2018

GIRLS, ON FILM

a zine about 80's movies



TOKYO POP

FOOTLOOSE

HAIRSPRAY

REPO MAN

FLASHDANCE

SHAG

VOYAGE OF THE ROCK

ALIENS

MODERN GIRLS

THEGIRLSONFILMZINE@GMAIL.COM



Greetings, from the Girls

Welcome to the debut issue of "Girls, on Film," a digital zine hopelessly devoted to movies released between 1980-1989. In every issue, we will discuss a handful of movies that revolve around a particular theme. And what better way to kick off a zine about the 80s than to talk about movies related to music?

This zine is co-founded and managed by: Stephanie McDevitt and Janene Scelza.

Stephanie has been a freelance writer and editor since 2012. Born at the beginning of the 80s, she has great appreciation for all movies, music, and fashion that came out of this radical decade. You can find her celebrating at 80s dance parties throughout the DC area.

Janene has written a buttload of zines in the last 20 years. She spent much of her high school years combing dank local video stores in search of every 80s movie her hometown had to offer. Occasionally, she gets out for those dance parties in the city, too.

WANNA HAVE FUN AND JOIN THE GIRLS? HAVE MOVIES OR THEMES TO RECOMMEND? HOLLA AT US - THEGIRLSONFILMZINE@GMAIL.COM

Integration Station: Hairspray

1988 / WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY JOHN WATERS
 ESSAY BY STEPHANIE MCDEVITT

John Waters' *Hairspray* was based on Waters' 1981 essay, "The Nicest Kids in Town" in which he wrote about *The Buddy Deane Show*, Baltimore's version of *American Bandstand*. In an [interview with the Washington Post](#), Waters said, "I was always obsessed by it. . . . I watched it for the fashion and for the drama, because Buddy Deane encouraged them to [date and] break up on film. I watched it like a soap opera. I watched and fantasized about it and made up stories about it in my brain." *The Buddy Deane Show* aired in Baltimore from 1957-1964. Only white kids were allowed to dance on the show except for one Monday a month when black kids could be on air. Amid increasing protests to integrate, the network canceled *The Buddy Deane Show* in 1964.

Born out of this obsession with *The Buddy Deane Show*, *Hairspray* paints a pastel picture of 1960s Baltimore, while examining racism through the eyes of teenagers desperate to dance on the fictional *Corny Collins Show*. The movie's eclectic cast, tacky aesthetic, and cheesy plot shows Waters' nostalgia for the Baltimore of his childhood, and his fictional account allowed him to create the fantasy ending that he had always wanted for *The Buddy Deane Show*.

Hairspray follows the rise of Tracy Turnblad (Ricki Lake), the "pleasantly plump" teenager who scores a spot dancing on *The Corny Collins Show*. Tracy is very popular with viewers and quickly becomes famous in Baltimore, much to the chagrin of Amber Von Tussle (Colleen Fitzpatrick). Amber had been the most popular girl on *The Corny Collins Show*, but when Tracy infringes on her territory, Amber goes out of her way to be mean to her. However, Tracy always comes out on top and eventually competes with Amber for the coveted title of Miss Auto Show 1963, which is given to the most popular female dancer on the show.

In the midst of the competition between Tracy and Amber is a battle to integrate *The Corny Collins Show*. The kids on the council (current dancers on the show) laugh at the idea. But Tracy uses her new-found fame to push for integration, and even participates in protests to allow black kids to dance on the show. Waters makes a point to show that while the kids on the council scoff at integration, they request and dance to music by black artists. They also love Motormouth Maybelle



Corny Collins broadcasting to the teenagers of Baltimore.



Tracy's bleached, teased hair eventually lands her in Special Ed.

(Ruth Brown), a black DJ and record store owner who frequently appears on the show. When Amber's mother, Velma (Debbie Harry), scolds her for requesting "Shake a Tail Feather," a song by the black group the Five Du-Tones, Amber explains that it's a good song and seems nonplussed by her mother's worry about what the neighbors might think.

In addition to playing black music and inviting black artists on the show, Corny Collins argues with the network bosses to integrate. The network executive, Arvin Hodgepile (Divine) is completely against it. When protests break out

over black kids not being allowed in the studio, Corny wants to let them in, but he's not allowed.

Divine's portrayal of Hodgepile is in direct contrast to her portrayal of Edna Turnblad, Tracy's mom. Edna and Tracy's dad, Wilbur (Jerry Stiller), are pro-integration. They have conversations about the changing times and recognize that segregation will not always be in place. They eventually join in on anti-segregation chants, and support Tracy in her quest for integration.

On the other side of the aisle stands Amber and her parents, Velma and Franklin (Sonny Bono), who are anti-integration. Franklin owns Tilted Acres Amusement Park, which is segregated. *The Corny Collins Show* does a live broadcast from Tilted Acres amid protests calling for integration of the park. Franklin and Velma go on air to state they will never integrate and the protest turns violent. Tracy gets arrested and sent to reform school and becomes the martyr for the Baltimore integration movement.

In between Tracy's progressive storyline and Amber's pro-segregation stance lies the strange story of Penny Pingleton (Leslie Ann Powers). Penny is Tracy's best friend and supports her through her rising fame on *The Corny Collins Show*. During a brutal game of dodgeball in gym class, Tracy introduces Penny to Seaweed (Clayton Prince), Motormouth Maybelle's son. Penny and Seaweed end up dating, but when Penny's mother, Prudence (Joann Havrilla), finds out she loses her mind.

When Tracy and Penny go to dance at Motormouth Maybelle's record store, Prudence follows their bus and then wanders around



Motormouth Maybelle gets the white kids dancing.



Amber, Velma, and Franklin HATE Tracy. They really hate her.

a black neighborhood looking for Penny. She is terrified of the black people she meets, including a black police officer, and when she finds Penny dancing with Seaweed at the record store, she implores the black people not to use their voodoo spells on her. Despite Penny's and Tracy's insistence that the people in the record store are their friends, Prudence still tries to drag them out of there. Penny runs away, but is found later that night with Seaweed. Penny ends up in a straightjacket and is locked in her room under the care of a psychiatrist, played by Waters, who tries to hypnotize her.

While Waters uses Penny and her parents to poke fun at the racism of the time, he's also trying to get us to take Tracy's integration cause seriously. The over-the-top antics of Penny's parents—locking her in her room, putting bars on her windows, and trying to free her from her attraction to a black boy—are obvious jabs at the anti-segregation movement. However, making Tracy the champion of the cause forces the viewer to accept the issue as a valid cause despite the kooky set-up. It makes the segregation issue accessible to the viewers, just as it was for Waters when he was growing up. While using a white character as a martyr for racial injustice is problematic, it mirrors what Waters was seeing on TV at the time.

At the end of the movie, *The Corny Collins Show* is broadcast from the Baltimore Auto Show so they can name their most popular female dancer Miss Auto Show 1963. Tracy gets enough votes, but because she's not in attendance due to the fact that the governor hasn't pardoned her yet, Amber wins. Eventually Tracy is freed and shows up with an entourage of people dancing the Roach in a conga line of sorts. Corny Collins recognizes that, with the black people Tracy just bought on set, white and black kids are dancing together on Baltimore TV for the first time. He declares *The Corny Collins Show* integrated, Tracy gets the Miss Auto Show 1963 title, and John Waters gets the ending he always wanted.

Predictability = Likeability: *Shag*

1989 / WRITTEN BY LANIER LANEY, TERRY SWEENEY, AND ROBIN SWICORD / DIRECTED BY ZELDA BARRON
ARTICLE BY STEPHANIE MCDEVITT

Set in the summer of 1963, *Shag* tells the story of four girls from Spartanburg, SC sneaking off to Myrtle Beach for a weekend of dancing, drinking, and boys. In the summer after high school graduation, these friends are looking for one last adventure before going their separate ways. *Shag* doesn't have the same intensity in its dance sequences like the other movies I've written about for this issue, and the problems faced by all four characters seem minor in comparison. But what *Shag* lacks in complexity, it makes up for with an innocence and naivety that is endearing and very likable.

The plot of *Shag* follows a standard movie blueprint: four girls on a beach vacation trying to meet boys. There is a festival, a pageant, a dance contest, and plenty of romance to go around. The main characters all fit into well-worn movie archetypes – the straight-laced, glasses wearing, senator's daughter who tries to wrangle her friends and make sure no one betrays their proper southern upbringing; the sexpot preacher's daughter who believes she is destined for stardom in Hollywood; the formerly fat but now pretty girl who has a damaged body image and is hoping to meet a boy; and the mature, repressed girl stuck in an unhappy relationship.

The movie begins as Luanne (Paige Hannah) picks up her friends for a weekend together prior to Carson's (Phoebe Cates) wedding. They've told their parents they are going to Fort Sumter to tour civil war monuments, but Luanne, Pudge (Annabeth Gish), and Melaina (Bridget Fonda) have decided to surprise Carson with a trip to Myrtle Beach instead. Carson is initially upset about this change in plans, but her friends try to convince her that it will be fun. And, of course, it is!



The girls arrive in Myrtle Beach.



Carson insists she's not interested in Buzz.



PURPLE JESUS!



Chip and Pudge sit on the beach and dissolve into adorable puppy love.

Upon arriving in Myrtle beach, they conveniently stay at Luanne's parent's summer house, but since they don't have permission to be there Luanne says they cannot touch anything, sit on the couch, or use the phone. As the girls all get ready for a night out on the boardwalk, Carson starts to cry at the thought of her friends all leaving for college while she is in Spartanburg and married to Harley (Tyrone Power, Jr.). They console her and promise to write letters every week, but it's already pretty clear that Carson is not looking forward to her future with Harley.

That night down at the beach pavilion they watch all the dancers shag, and Pudge is desperate for a dance partner. Who should come along but two mysterious boys, Buzz (Robert Rusler) and Chip (Scott Coffey). Buzz is tall, dark, and handsome and takes an instant liking to Carson, who, at first, won't give him the time of day because she is engaged. Chip takes a shine to Pudge and the four of them eventually leave together to enjoy the boardwalk. They go on rides, which make Carson sick, and then to a drive-in where Pudge finally convinces Chip to shag (dance) with her.

The director does a nice job of juxtaposing the Carson/Buzz relationship as a sexually charged affair and the Pudge/Chip relationship as cute puppy love. For example, the next day Carson and Buzz go fishing and Chip and Pudge go to the beach. The movie cuts back and forth between scenes of Buzz and Carson getting closer and eventually kissing, and Pudge and Chip taking a magazine quiz about how sexually experienced they are. They are both so embarrassed about the questions, they take the quiz with a towel over their head. It's all very sweet in comparison to watching Carson cheat on her fiancé. But in the end, both situations are rather mild, because, as I said before, this movie is, well, rather mild.

While Pudge and Carson are off with their boys, Melaina is preparing for the Miss Sun Festival, which is judged by famous greaser Jimmy Valentine (Jeff Yagher). Melaina's goal is to win the pageant, get discovered by Jimmy Valentine, and break out in Hollywood. Melaina loses but manages to convince Luanne to use her stature as a senator's daughter to invite Jimmy Valentine back to the house for a

party later that night. In the midst of all of this, Harley shows up unannounced and Carson and Buzz run off together to hide from him.

Back at the house that night, Jimmy Valentine comes over and wants to know where the party is. Melaina implores Chip to get some of his friends to come over, and the next thing you know, the house is full of teenagers drinking a liquor concoction called Purple Jesus out of a big metal basin. The party was bound to happen when Luanne first told the girls they weren't allowed to sit on the couch. The situation called for a raging party and, by *Shag* standards, this is a rager. Nothing is broken, no one gets hurt or dies, and while Luanne initially tries to stop everyone from going crazy, she eventually joins in the fun. The next morning when she finds out her parents are on their way, everything gets cleaned up with no problems.

During the party Buzz and Carson hide out on Luanne's parent's yacht. Her friends run interference with Harley the entire night telling him she was sick and took a bus back to Spartanburg. Carson ends up sleeping with Buzz, or, as Pudge says, she "went all the way." The next morning she tells Harley she doesn't want to get married, which we knew at the beginning of the movie, and their wedding is eventually called off.



Chip and pudge crush it in the shag contest.

So why does this movie work? If it follows a predictable plot line with predictable characters, what about it is so endearing? Part of it is that the characters are all actually friends with each other. When Melaina plans to enter the Miss Sun Festival contest, Luanne helps her prepare a monologue from *Gone With the Wind* for the talent portion, and then all the girls watch the contest and cheer her on. When Pudge and Chip compete in the shag contest they all come out and watch them win (because of course they win). When Harley shows up the other girls distract him and keep him away from Carson. Perhaps they all knew Carson needed to get out of the relationship, or perhaps they just didn't want to get in trouble for letting their engaged friend go off with a strange guy. It doesn't matter why they did it. They all acted to support each other at every turn in this movie.

Showing the main characters supporting their friends is a simple plot point, but it points to the overall simplicity of the entire movie. None of the girls have major problems or issues to overcome. Their main concerns fall with meeting boys and having fun at the beach. Carson's relationship issue is the biggest obstacle, but she eventually gets out of the wedding and the movie ends with each girl ready to move forward with their lives.

This movie is so nostalgic for a time when life was simple. I'm not referring to a specific historical era, but rather a time in life when bills, jobs, and other adult responsibilities didn't exist. To jump in the car with my best friends and spend a weekend at the beach dancing and drinking without a care in the world sounds amazing, and *Shag* allows us to experience that through these four friends.

Bein's Believin': Flashdance

1983 / WRITTEN BY THOMAS HEDLEY, JR. & JOE ESZTERHAS /
DIRECTED BY ADRIAN LYNE
ESSAY BY JANENE SCELZA

Flashdance is one of those 80s hits that is all style and no substance. Critics panned the movie when it hit theaters in 1983. Its director, Adrian Lyne, twice turned down the offer to direct because he hated the script. Even Paramount Pictures seemed to be bracing for a financial flop, selling off a percentage of the project prior to the film's release. The movie about the underdog was itself a dubious underdog. But, audiences *loved* it. In fact, *Flashdance* was such a hit that it became the [third highest grossing film](#) that year behind *Return of the Jedi* and *Terms of Endearment*, making an unwitting star of Jennifer Beals. The movie was slated for a sequel (Beals didn't want to reprise the role), and more recently, was adapted for the stage. I guess bein' really is believin'.

Set in quintessentially blue-collar Pittsburgh, *Flashdance* follows the tradition of the working-class hero chasing big dreams much like Tony Manero in *Saturday Night Fever*. Alex Owens (Beals) is the teenage Steel Town girl who's looking for the fight of her life. That might be overstating it a bit, considering that Alex's circumstances aren't all that bad, nor her goal all that extreme. She has a (presumably) good-paying day job as a welder. She's a talented exotic dancer in a neighborhood bar where she can remain clothed AND doesn't get harassed (well, except by that asshole, Johnny C.). She shares an awesome loft with her mellow pitbull. And, there really isn't anyone pressuring her about what direction to take in life (because who the hell knows where her family is?) And for all its sexiness, *Flashdance's* main character is pretty wholesome.



Cue the Fraggle Rock theme.

So, what's the fight of Alex's life? Well, she loves to dance and wants to do it professionally (and not in titty bars), but first, she needs to muster the courage to audition for a spot in the city's dance conservatory. That's pretty much it. Tom Hedley's story is so short on any character development, it feels better suited as backstory for a music video (and in a way, it is). But, at an hour and a half running time, it made Alex far less interesting than the original dancers on which she is based.

Even the secondary characters feel purely placeholder – Alex's elderly mentor (Lilia Skala), a former ballerina; the parallel stories of her friends, a figure skater (Sunny Johnson) and a god awful standup comic (Kyle Heffner) who “go for it” but fail; the wolf-in-waiting strip club owner (Fear frontman, Lee Ving) who desperately wants to recruit Alex and her fellow dancers; the wise old dancer who tearfully

reminisces about giving up on her dreams; and, for good measure, the courting boss (Michael Nouri) twice Alex's age who has all the right connections. The cast certainly deserves credit because, for all the underdeveloped characters, at least it wasn't phoned in. Even Roger Ebert, who absolutely hated the movie, felt Beals was a "natural talent" who is "fresh and engaging."

But, what *Flashdance* lacks in substance it certainly makes up for in style. In fact, the movie earned a Razzie nomination for Worst Screenplay, as well as Academy Award nominations for Best Editing



80s hair was no match for necklines.

and Best Cinematography and a win for Best Song (Irena Cara's titular "Flashdance (What a Feeling)"). The movie [has its beginnings](#) in Myron Zabol's Toronto-based photography studio in 1980, where Gina Healy and Maureen Marder posed for the camera. The two women were strippers who worked at a Canadian club called Gimlets which catered to lavish burlesque shows, much like Mawby's Bar in the movie. Screenwriter Tom Hedley commissioned the photos, which would serve as a visual treatment to sell the script to a studio. While Maureen Marder is often credited as the sole inspiration for the character of Alex because she had a day

job in construction, it was Gina Healy who donned the kabuki makeup similar to that used in one of the dance sequences in the bar. Paramount paid the women a few thousand dollars to release the studio from any claim regarding their life stories while the movie went on to gross millions. Plural.

Directors Brian DePalma and David Cronenberg, both known for their keen visual aesthetics, were considered for the project before British director, Adrian Lyne, was brought on. Though Lyne is probably best known for his work on *Fatal Attraction*, he only had one feature film (*Foxes*) under his belt before *Flashdance*. His background was actually in directing television commercials, and it's apparent in some of the dance sequences. Alex's practice session in the loft and the gym scene look like old Leggs ads. The audition sequence, where the square admissions officers finally perk up, might as well have ended with Alex plopping down a sweating can of Pepsi. They certainly are fun sequences, especially given the accompanying soundtrack, corny as they may look now.

For me, the film's most memorable moments (and perhaps, its closest lineage to MTV) are the dance sequences in the bar. In one, Alex appears onstage as a high-heeled silhouette in a boxy suit as the opening riff to Shandi's "He's a Dream" cues up. She writhes around and kneels on the floor, pounding her fists on the seat of a chair like a woman in heat, intensifying as the music does. Then... the iconic moment: Alex sits outstretched in the chair, reaches for a cord above her head, and douses herself (and some of the audience) with a bucket of water. That should have been the end of the number, but she continues dancing until the song finishes (and by some miracle, she does it without slipping all over the stage!).

The other great dance sequence, which is set to Laura Branigan's "Imagination," was the one inspired by Zabol's photo shoot. A girl in kabuki makeup and a costume that looks like a throwback to the



Chanelling a classic Maxell ad...

video for Patty's Smyth's "The Warrior" dances around a small, back-lit television, eventually stripping down to a tattered aerobics outfit as a seizure-inducing strobe kicks off, signifying pure madness. Were it not for cutting back and forth between stage and audience, you'd forget it's all supposed to take place in some neighborhood bar and grill where the owner is a gruff, fat guy who is concerned about the size of hamburgers. Oh, what business-minded Johnny C. could have done with the place!

Flashdance has been credited with resuscitating the musical genre, which I was surprised to learn at first, given the success of *Fame* only a few years earlier. But, part of the reason why this has been attributed to *Flashdance* is that it helped to reinvent the genre. The characters didn't punctuate the narrative with campy show tunes. They were much too hip for that (also, they saved that for *Flashdance: the Musical*). Instead, the movie showcases dancing, coupled with a catchy pop soundtrack, which also made marketing to the MTV crowd fairly easy. And once the movie and the soundtrack both became a hit, studio executives were suddenly [blowing their loads](#) at the pitch meetings for similar films. In the year following *Flashdance* alone, *Beat Street*, *Purple Rain*, *Breakin' AND Breakin' 2* ([because Cannon films never was one to piss around](#)), *Streets of Fire*, and Paramount's *Footloose*, were released. Not bad for a dubious underdog.



Wild sex in the working class.

Repression, Rebellion, and Kenny Loggins: Footloose

1984 / WRITTEN BY DEAN PITCHFORD / DIRECTED BY HERBERT ROSS
 ESSAY BY STEPHANIE MCDEVITT

Herbert Ross' 1984 teen drama, *Footloose*, is [loosely based on the true story](#) of Elmore City, OK where, in the late 1800s, lawmakers banned dancing within city limits. In 1980, the junior class at the local high school, tired of having class banquets with no dancing, lobbied the town council to allow dancing at the prom. While Elmore City was divided on the issue, local pastors voiced their



Ren cutting loose in a Texas dance hall.

objections from the pulpit and the high school students eventually won the right to dance.

This sounds like a feel-good story ripe for a movie script, right? Unfortunately, even though the writers and directors of *Footloose* were handed the recipe for a great movie, they very much missed the mark. The opening credits roll while Kenny Loggins' infectious title track plays as different pairs of feet dance on screen, setting up viewers for a movie experience that is quite different from what they are about to get. The upbeat, carefree song and dance stands in stark contrast to the story that follows in which repression, rebellion, and grief paint a dismal picture of small town America.

Set in the fictional town of Bomont, the movie opens with Ren McCormack (Kevin Bacon), the new kid in town, attending his first church service. Ren recently moved with his mother from Chicago to live with his aunt and uncle after his father left them. Ren has a cool haircut, wears ties to school, and reads *Slaughterhouse Five*, a book banned in Bomont, which is enough for the religious community to label him a troublemaker.

Ren adjusts to his new life by finding a job, joining the gymnastics team, and befriending Willard (Chris Penn). However, the one thing he really misses from his old life are the dance clubs in Chicago. As Willard eventually tells him, dancing in Bomont is not allowed. Ren becomes friends with Ariel Moore (Lori Singer), the pastor's daughter, and takes her, Willard, and Willard's girlfriend Rusty (Sarah Jessica Parker) out dancing at a bar in a neighboring town. On the way home Ariel explains to Ren that dancing and rock and roll music are banned in Bomont because a group of teenagers were killed in a car accident on the way home from a night of dancing. Included in the death toll was

Ariel's older brother, so Pastor Shaw Moore (John Lithgow) lobbied the town council to ban dancing and rock music, convincing them that it leads to drugs, drinking, and premarital sex.

Ren eventually decides that the only way to find real meaning in his life is to get permission to have a prom. He attends a town council meeting and uses Bible passages in his speech to try to appeal to the religious community, who seem to run Bomont. Despite all the support Ren gets from his classmates, the council votes against having a dance. However, Ren's boss lets him use an old barn outside of town limits, so the kids in Bomont get to have their prom.

Ren seems to be the main character in this movie, but his story is muddled with the tension between Ariel and her dad. He struggles with the challenges of living in a small, close-minded town, and he has to overcome bullying and harassment, but his problems within the grand scheme of the movie seem secondary. It almost seems like Ren was dropped into Bomont in the middle of a terrible family meeting at Ariel's house.



Pastor Moore is very, very sad.

The conflict between Shaw Moore and Ariel is definitely the core of this movie, even if the movie doesn't frame it that way. Pastor Moore is an especially dour person, and John Lithgow is excellent at playing the sad, disappointed father. Lost in grief over the death of his son, he has used his religious stature to influence the lawmakers in Bomont. He says that it is his job to be the moral compass of this town, and to act as a father to his flock. While the adults in town follow his directives and ban anything that Pastor Moore implies may lead to sinful behavior, his own daughter ignores all of his rules. Pastor's Moore's wife, Vi (Diane Wiest), attempts to tell him that he needs to find a way to talk with Ariel, but he is resistant to her suggestions.

Dealing with her own grief over the loss of her brother and the tension with her father, Ariel drinks, dances, listens to rock music, and has sex with her boyfriend. At first these behaviors make Ariel seem like the stereotypical pastor's daughter, railing against the repression of a religious household.



Ariel begins one of her suicidal games of chicken.

However, she also plays two very dangerous games of chicken and is saved at the last second both times. While all of Ariel's behavior speaks to the problems with her father, her suicidal tendencies show just how much she is suffering under his harsh rule. It's a very sad commentary on the effects of grief and parental neglect.

The tension between Ariel and her father comes to a head when she confronts him in the church as he rehearses his sermon. They argue

over Pastor Moore's objection to the prom and he tells Ariel that he is responsible for her spiritual growth. She then tells him she is no longer a virgin and he screams at her about using that language in church. They fight, but they are interrupted when Pastor Moore learns that people in town are having a book burning. He rushes to stop them and tells them to go home and sit in judgement of themselves.

If Pastor Moore played an integral part in banning books from Bomont, why would he oppose a book burning? The townspeople obviously think they are doing his work when they burn the books, so why does he stop them? If this is the moment when he realizes that he has gone too far in his attempt to control both the people of Bomont and his daughter, why doesn't he acknowledge it? It is a very abrupt change for Pastor Moore without any explanation. Maybe the argument with Ariel made him see that he was wrong in his attempts to ban books and music, but their fight was interrupted, so could he have had a change of heart that quickly?

Pastor Moore's struggles with both Ariel and the people of Bomont bring us back to Ren and his larger purpose within the movie. He is set up to be some sort of savior to Bomont. He's the guy that is going to free them from their religious repression and make them realize they've gone over the edge. Instead the townspeople deny the prom and burn books, and Pastor Moore doesn't recognize his mistakes. You could argue that Ren is Ariel's savior, but, aside from being allowed to go to the prom, Ariel and her father never resolve anything. Perhaps Pastor Moore's final scene in which he dances with Vi outside the prom is an indication that he's slowly coming around, but I'm not sure that's enough to show that Ren, or the dance, really made a difference.

Finally, the biggest question comes from the writer's decision to deny the kids the opportunity to have a prom. In the story of Elmore City, the high schoolers win. Why would the writers of this movie not include this? It's the perfect cliché ending that would have provided a moment of redemption for the people of Bomont. Instead they turn a story with a happy ending into a depressing commentary on the persuasion power of a religious leader mired in grief and guilt. As the movie ends with another high energy dance sequence to Loggins' "Footloose," the viewers are left to reconcile the upbeat, carefree song with the sad state of the repressed people of Bomont and the inability of the religious community to accept change.



The kids of Bomont cutting loose at the Prom.

Big in Japan: Tokyo Pop

1988 / WRITTEN BY FRAN RUBEL KUZUI AND LYNN GROSSMAN /
DIRECTED BY FRAN RUBEL KUZUI
ESSAY BY JANENE SCELZA

Tokyo Pop is a bittersweet East-meets-West rock n' roll romance from the late 1980s. On the surface, it's an oddball romantic comedy about an American singer who travels to Japan, joins a band, and becomes famous. But at its core, the film delves into Tokyo's complicated love affair with the West.

Carrie Hamilton, Carol Burnett's daughter, stars as Wendy, an aspiring singer stuck performing backup in one shitty band after the next. When a postcard arrives from a friend living in Tokyo she decides to ditch New York and try her luck there. She's heard about American rockers becoming big stars in Japan, and she figures, if they can do it why can't she?

"You're going to love it here," a fellow ex-pat tells Wendy when she arrives in Japan. "They love blondes." But, the punky girl with platinum locks finds her plan for rock n' roll superstardom immediately off to a shaky start when she discovers that her friend already moved to Thailand. In need of a place to stay, Wendy gets a room at the Mickey House, a group house styled inn where all the gaijins (foreigners) stay, named for its Mickey Mouse décor. She also gets a job at a hostess bar, entertaining dorky, drunk Japanese businessmen in the evenings.

One night after missing the train home from work, Wendy meets a charismatic rock n' roller named Hiro (Red Warriors frontman, Diamond Yukai). Wendy barely speaks any Japanese and Hiro doesn't speak much English (at first), and while the language barrier creates some minor misunderstandings, the two eventually hit it off. Like Wendy, Hiro loves rock n' roll and he, too, dreams of being a famous rock musician. He is also emblematic of young Tokyo: his rock n' roll identity is largely influenced by the West. He idolizes Mick Jagger and Jimi Hendrix. He (curiously) wants to sing like Frank Sinatra. His band covers American rock and pop songs. Generally, Hiro doesn't embrace anything too Japanese.



Move to Tokyo she said. It'd be fun.



Hiro and the band attend a show.



Wendy meets Hiro at a street-side ramen joint.

Hiro's band wants to recruit Wendy to sing with them, hoping that a gaijin might finally get them noticed by the famous producer, Mr. Dota (Tetsurô Tanba). Wendy, wary of joining yet another boyfriend's band and not being taken seriously, decides to audition with other bands. But, when she finally gets a gig, she's too excited to notice how terrible it is, and questions her talent rather than her screening process. Hiro later tries to cheer her up when they are alone together, asking her to join him in an acoustic version of "(You Make Me Feel Like) a Natural Woman." Wendy demonstrates her talent, and Hiro, his sincerity.

Hiro and Wendy soon record the track for a demo for Mr. Dota, who gets them a gig. When Hiro and Wendy learn that they'll be opening for a wrestling act, they argue about whether they should even go through with the performance. Hiro explains that they only got the gig because of Wendy (they wanted a gaijin), and that it might keep them from getting any serious gigs going forward. But Wendy argues that it's national television, and that kind of exposure is good enough. But none of this matters the minute Mr. Dota and a camera crew barge in, snapping photos of the spat, which makes front page news. Hiro and Wendy are famous! Soon, they're appearing on talk shows and commercials. And Mr. Dota signs them to a recording contract.

"This is what we wanted. We're going to be famous. Make some money." Wendy says this to Hiro with some doubt in her voice as they stroll around the beach. The couple spends a subdued third act doing some soul searching. Wendy had from the start wanted to be the kind of musician that people took seriously. But, she realizes that this can never really happen for her in Japan. "I don't belong here. If I stay with you, in Japan, I'll never know if I can make it. I'll always be the gaijin. The freak," she explains to Hiro shortly before they're supposed to play a big gig.

Wendy wants to quit the band and go home, saying that no one hears their music. And this is something Hiro can relate to; a talented songwriter, he had long shied away from performing the

songs he wrote in Japanese thinking that no one would want to hear songs about himself, given how reserved the Japanese are. At the end of the film, we see Hiro finally introducing his song ("Hiro's Song") to an eager crowd, followed by Wendy performing "Never Forget" (which Carrie Hamilton also wrote) in a recording studio as the credits roll.

Writer/director Fran Rubel Kuzui spent three years trying to perfect the script for *Tokyo Pop* (later, with Lynn Grossman). [She had gotten the idea for the film from her travels back and forth between her native New York and Tokyo.](#)

"The music I'd been listening to in Japan and the experiences I had seemed like an interesting subject for a film." [She'd spend her career traversing the two cities](#) and, even now, could probably write just as interesting a story about Westerners in Tokyo, particularly older characters. The final result feels like a labor of love.

Kuzui wasn't a filmmaker prior to all of this. *Tokyo Pop* marked her directorial and scriptwriting debut. She is, however, a prominent distributor of U.S. and foreign films in Japan, and exporter of Japanese films with her Japanese husband, Kaz. Friends in the business had encouraged them to make a film, and offered a funding scheme that would essentially give them total artistic freedom. Even her young stars were novices – Hamilton was playing the lead for the first time, and Diamond Yukai had never appeared in a film before. "They not only brought the story I wanted to share to life, but have also written beautiful music," [Kuzui would later tell Wide Angle/Closeup.](#) "This was a first for all of us, and we can truly say we helped each other find talents we have within us."

Kuzui thumbs her nose at the glittery notion of being "big in Japan." For Westerners, it may ultimately mean hollow, fleeting fame and constant alienation (though I wonder if Kuzui, having spent many years in Japan, feels like an outsider as a white, American-born woman). But it also left young Tokyoites vying for competition for recognition on their own turf, something that Kuzui found even in her work. "There's never a good showcase for young Japanese talent," she once said. "I mean, they have all these sales agents that come from foreign countries to sell films to the Japanese and they never really make an effort to involve young Japanese filmmakers with the filmmakers that they involve from the foreign countries."

But it's not all tragic romance; this is, after all, a movie about rock n' roll. There's a wonderful quirkiness as well, such as the scenes of the band creatively attempting to get their demo tape to Mr. Dota; Hiro's old-fashioned grandfather complaining about his mother's egregious lack of domestic skill as a gigantic bucket of KFC graces the dinner table; Hiro's father, an artisan of plastic replicas of food telling Hiro he should give up rock n' roll and get a lucrative job like making plastic food; the drunk businessmen in the hostess bar proudly telling Wendy in broken English about the mid-range companies they work for; and the several musical performances peppered throughout. Altogether, it's a wonderful little indie film, though a woefully obscure one at that. For now, see it on YouTube.



Say "cha-ching" for the camera!

Glamorous Boredom: Modern Girls

1986 / WRITTEN BY LAURIE CRAIG AND ANITA ROSENBERG / DIRECTED BY JERRY KRAMER

ESSAY BY JANENE SCELZA

The 1986 comedy, *Modern Girls*, follows three roommates and their hapless date on an all-night joyride around the L.A. club scene. Despite the title, the movie makes no real contributions to the feminist films of the gender-bending decade. It's three central characters, Cece (Cynthia Gibb), insecure Kelly (Virginia Madsen), and jaded Margo (Daphne Zuniga), are as much an homage to the melodramatic comic panels of pop artist Roy Lichtenstein as its cover art. The roommates disappear into forgettable jobs by day. But by night, they spend hours transforming into fashionistas, ready to hit the clubs where, at least initially, they seem like a nocturnal royalty. According to their mantra, they don't pay for parking or drinks, they don't carry cash, and they never wait in line. But as the night rolls on, the glamorous facade fades away, and a tragic emptiness is revealed. Each of the female characters seem to expect to be rescued from by THE perfect man. Worse, at least two of

the three women should plainly see how wrong they're going about all of this.



No 80s bedroom is complete without a giant mural.

On this particular night, the roommates are joined by Cliff (Clayton Rohner), Kelly's date for the evening. Think of Cliff as a clone of Rick, the character Clayton Rohner played the previous year in *Just One of the Guys*. He's a sweet guy with zero style who is about to spend the night with a bunch of hip women. (Cliff even gets a Cool Dude makeover, just like Rick!)

Cliff is one of probably a dozen guys seen fawning over Kelly at the pet store where she works, so it's no surprise that Kelly forgets she even has a date with him when she decides to

ditch her roommates and head to the club early in Margo's car in an attempt to "make it work" with her dickhead boyfriend, Brad (Steve Shellen). Still desperate to go out, but short on transportation, Cece and Margo lie to Cliff and tell him that Kelly is expecting to meet him at the club so they can get a ride with him. "The hottest nights are the ones where you don't know who you're coming home with. Here we are, we don't even know who we're going out with!" Cece tells Cliff.

It doesn't take Cliff long to realize that (duh!) Kelly stood him up, but Margo and Cece convince him to stick around and hang out with them anyways. While Margo complains to Cliff about the lack of perfect male specimens at the club, and Kelly is off somewhere getting dumped by asshole Brad, British rock star Bruno X (also Rohner) crashes the party, and star-struck Cece does all she can to get his attention. When he finally notices her (because she jumps on top of him), they retreat to



Are we there yet?

a quiet corner of the club to chat. Cece, who is unemployed and “broke as shit” (as the kids say), naturally embellishes about herself. Bruno is flattered, telling her that (ugh...) he’s “in love with her imagination.” Bruno is leaving town in the morning and invites Cece, the woman he’s known for all of five minutes, to go with him. But, before she can respond, they are interrupted by police raiding the bar for a liquor license violation, sending everyone scattering. When Cece catches up again with Cliff and Margo, she begs them to help her find Bruno. “A man I am totally in *like* with just asked me to get on a plane!” she frantically explains.

While Cliff, Margo, and Cece scour the city for faint traces of Bruno X, heartbroken Kelly winds up at a pool hall with her tweaker club friends (played by *Thrashin’s* Jonathan Richman and Bruce Springsteen’s sister, Pamela) who give her ecstasy. Casual use of hard drugs is already fairly jarring in an otherwise dopey, PG-13 rated comedy, but it gets even weirder. When the drugs kick in, Kelly writhes around on a pool table talking a bunch of nonsense while a crowd of beefy truck driver types encircle her like a pack of ravenous wolves. But, Cliff and the gang luckily swoop in at the last second to rescue her, and in a way meant to make light of the situation, Cliff claims to be a government agent responding to a radioactive spill and Kelly was the last victim they needed to track down. The truck drivers follow them out the door looking intensely disappointed that they didn’t get to gang rape a woman. Then, Kelly narrowly avoids being raped again later in the movie when she goes for a ride with a creepy guy (Chris Nash) that she had been bumping into all night. And again, Cliff, Margo, and Cece appear just in time to save the day, beating the guy down and handing him over to the police. Some women might by this point be traumatized enough to call it a night and go home. But, the friends only argue a little with each other before continuing their ridiculous search for Bruno X.

Cliff confesses to Margo that he pitied Kelly when her first met her, and that’s why he asked her out. He actually has more in common with Margo, though their budding romance seems utterly



Cece is totally in-like with Bruno X.



Kelly finds L.A.'s only trucker pool hall.



Margot's curious moment.

contrived. Margo appears to have run the gambit on men, with unimpressive results. When Cliff complains that “no one in L.A. reads anymore,” Margo, without missing a beat, tells him that she was a comparative literature major. A classics major himself, Cliff perks up at the news, until she tells him that she “mostly majored in men.” At least one reason for Margo still being single is her impossibly high standards. She even dismisses Cliff as the boring Nice Guy. But, the filmmakers, very subtly, seem to imply that there is another reason. When Cliff and Margo are hanging out at the first club, she points out the flaws in a smorgasbord of guys she seems to have been romantically linked to – from hairband types, to rich cool guys, to khaki-clad yuppies. When Cliff asks Margo why she even bothers coming to the club, she gives a sideways glance and looks out. The camera quickly cuts to a blond woman in a bikini top and tight white skirt dancing by herself. Could Margo’s problem with men be that she’s actually attracted to women? If so, the possibility is abandoned for the rest of the film, since Margo later tells Cliff that she’s sure the perfect guy is out there and she’ll one day find him.

Modern Girls was, not surprisingly, a box office flop. Apparently, [Depeche Mode weren't fans](#) either, but for very different reasons: Sire Records opted to use the inferior B-side “But Not Tonight” from their *Black Celebration* album rather than “Stripped” for the film’s new wave soundtrack. Needless to say, the single failed to chart. (“Stripped” can be heard instead on

the soundtrack for the 1989 film, *Say Anything*). Even the music video for “But Not Tonight” is fairly boring: the band performs, expressionless, as scenes from the movie are projected on a screen behind them.

With music video veteran, Jerry Kramer, at the director’s helm, the film did get points for style, though even there the art directors went a bit overboard like the way some *Miami Vice* episodes look now where you might wonder, is this how things really looked in the 80s? And, [thanks to heavy rotation on HBO](#), *Modern Girls* did manage cult status.

The Beach, Alien, Musical, Horror Show: Voyage of the Rock Aliens

1984 / WRITTEN BY EDWARD GOLD, JAMES GUIDOTTI, AND CHARLES HAIRSTON / DIRECTED BY JAMES FARGO
 ESSAY BY STEPHANIE MCDEVITT

The 1984 Pia Zadora movie-musical, *Voyage of the Rock Aliens*, combines several movie genres in a somewhat confusing, unenjoyable movie spoof. The writers intended to poke fun at all different types of movies, but by working in elements of musicals, science fiction, slasher films, and beach party movies, the final product is 97 minutes of jumbled, clunky storytelling. And while cheesy 80s movies can often be so bad that they're good, *Voyage of the Rock Aliens* does not fall into that category.

The voyage starts with a group of aliens flying through space in a guitar-shaped ship on a scientific mission to find the source of rock and roll music. Their first stop is an unnamed planet where they witness Jermaine Jackson and Pia Zadora perform some sort of gang/sci-fi music video to their song "When the Rain Begins to Fall." This musical number is unrelated to the rest of the movie. Pia Zadora's role has nothing to do with this music video, and while the song is reprised at the end of the movie, there is no other mention of Jermaine Jackson, or this unnamed planet. This is simply a music video commercial for Jermaine Jackson's and Pia Zadora's single. I would also argue that this is the most enjoyable musical number in the movie.

Apparently, Jermaine Jackson wasn't enough for these aliens, so their next stop is Earth. They perform a musical number and we see that the aliens, named ABCD, EFGHI, JKLA, NOPQR, STUVWXYZ, and AEIOU, are already a band. They sing new wave 80s music and sound a lot like Devo (and some of them are actual members of a band called Rhema), so why are they searching for rock music? This is never really explained, and it is also the last time their scientific search for music is mentioned. Their apparent quest, which is the whole point of their visit to Earth, is thrown out in the first 10 minutes of the movie.

The aliens head for the small town of Speelburgh where, on the shores of Lake Eerie (home to a giant sea monster), the teenage population is having a beach party. Here we meet Dee Dee (Pia



The unrelated Jermaine Jackson and Pia Zadora music video.



The writing's on the wall.

Zadora) and Frankie (Craig Sheffer), the Annette and Frankie of this movie. While they seem to be in a relationship, they have few interactions that make me think they actually like each other. Dee Dee is completely consumed with singing in Frankie's band, The Pack, and Frankie is adamant that no one sings in his band but him.

After making their way into town, the aliens give a public performance on a farm tractor and are asked to play at the cotillion, which is taking place at Heidi High that night. There is only one problem with this: Frankie's band is also playing the cotillion. Never one to pass up an opportunity to sing in a band, Dee Dee befriends the alien ABCD (Tom Nolan), who is already in love with Dee Dee, and explains how she wants to sing in a band. So, ABCD invites her to sing with them and she immediately accepts.

As you can imagine, Frankie is very unhappy about this and they break up right before the cotillion starts. The bands take to stages opposite each other and have a battle of genres. The aliens sing a new wave version of a song called "Let's Dance Tonight," while The Pack counters with their own rock-a-billy version of the same song. Frankie eventually storms out in disgust, and Dee Dee and the aliens win the battle.

After the battle of the bands, Dee Dee and ABCD discuss their future as bandmates. Dee Dee is very excited at the possibility of playing in a novelty band (with aliens) and talks about profitability and merchandising. ABCD, who is more interested in a relationship with Dee Dee, explains that if she goes back to his planet she can never return to Speelburgh. This isn't what Dee Dee wants, so she

leaves ABCD brokenhearted and goes running back to Frankie.

This movie would have worked just fine as a play on the teenage beach movies of the 60s. The music isn't memorable, but the choreography is decent and the staging of the musical numbers is often pretty funny. There are several scenes at a malt shop called Local Teenage Hangout, and the battle of the bands at the high school acts as the perfect climax for this high school drama. The aliens' trip to earth, the competition between The Pack and the alien band, and Dee Dee's search for stardom are enough to comprise a decent spoof movie. However, the writers mixed in two other storylines that had little to do with the main story, and did nothing but muddle the plot.

In the first scene of the movie there is a sea monster that appears in Lake Eerie. There are brief shots of tentacles throughout the movie, but we don't see the significance of the monster until the end of the movie, when it attacks the high school. In order to introduce the attack, Dee Dee and ABCD have a discussion about acid rain and its effects on Lake Eerie. This dialogue is completely out of place in the movie and disrupts the flow of the storyline. There is no need to explain the appearance of the sea monster at this point. We know it exists; they showed it to us multiple times. While the attack on the high school is strange, it would have worked, and it would have been funny, without a scientific explanation of the lake water.

In addition to the sea monster, the writers also included an escaped mental patient who roams around town killing people with a chainsaw. Only named Chainsaw (Michael Berryman), he goes after Diane (Alison La Placa), Dee Dee's best friend. He has her cornered when his chainsaw breaks, and then she helps him fix it. While



The Pack take the stage at the cotillion.



Frankie, who is not singing with The Pack, because he rarely sings with The Pack.



Dee Dee wants to monetize the novelty of playing in an alien band. ABCD is not feeling it.



ABCD and the alien band doing their best Devo impression.

Diane is fixing the chainsaw, Dee Dee and Frankie have reunited at the high school, but are now being attacked by the giant sea monster. Diane gets the chainsaw fixed right in time for Chainsaw to cut up the sea monster's tentacle, forcing the monster to retreat back to the lake. After he saves the day, Diane and Chainsaw go off together for a date. However, given Chainsaw's past activities, we can only imagine he brutally murdered her on the shores of Lake Eerie.

Confusing plot lines aside, there are no likeable character in this movie. Dee Dee will use anyone to achieve her goal of singing in a band. Why can't she just start her own band? She is completely reliant on the men in the movie to give her the opportunity to sing. Frankie is adamant that he is the only one who can sing with The Pack. However, The Pack performs several times throughout the movie and we only see Frankie sing with them once. It's hard to believe that his band is that important to him if he never actually sings with them. The best of the musical numbers is the Jermain Jackson song at the beginning of the movie, and that has nothing to do with the plot.

This movie is obviously a spoof, and there are aspects of it that could work. But the writers tried so hard to make fun of all the different genres, that the fun of satire is lost in the confusion of multiple storylines that do not mesh well. Caught up in this mash of plot lines are unlikeable characters and bad music.

All in all, *Voyage of the Rock Aliens* was difficult to get through and unenjoyable to watch.

The End is Nigh: Repo Man

1984 / WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY ALEX COX
 ESSAY BY JANENE SCELZA

Repo Man is one of my all-time favorite 80s movies. Blending black comedy, science fiction, Reagan-era dystopia, and So Cal punk, the 1984 cult classic follows a strangely entangled group of punks, repo men, government agents, and UFO enthusiasts as they chase an elusive, radioactive Chevy Malibu around an other-worldly version of Los Angeles.

Emilio Esteves is Otto, an aimless suburban teenage punk. Fired from a menial supermarket job, cheated on by his girlfriend, and neglected by his brain-dead hippie parents, he doesn't have much going for him. While wandering the streets one day, he's approached by Bud (Harry Dean Stanton), a middle-age repo man working for the Helping Hands Acceptance Company (HHAC). Bud concocts some story about needing to take his pregnant wife to the hospital and offers to pay Otto to help him move her car. When Otto follows Bud back to the repo yard with the car, Bud offers him a job. While Otto makes it known that he hates repo men, a premonition about working shitty jobs well into his old age, and learning that his parents donated money earmarked for him to a corrupt TV preacher, force him to reconsider.

Bud takes Otto on as his repo protégé, showing him the ropes. His first piece of advice: dress like a detective. If people think he's a cop, they're less likely to mess with him. He also explains the Repo Code – he won't willfully damage a car or its content, and he won't carry a gun because he doesn't believe it's worth getting killed over a car.

The repo business is a lot different than what Otto imagined. "A repo man's life is always intense!" Bud tells Otto, placing them on a higher plane of existence than the rest of humanity, adding, of course, that this is why they're all addicted to speed. Otto learns this quickly when riding around with Bud, and they get into a car chase in the L.A. River (the concrete reservoir used in several iconic movie chase scenes like *To Live and Die in L.A.* and *Terminator 2*) with competing repo men, the Rodriguez Brothers. Otto savors the outlaw



Working stiffs.



Bud propositions Otto.



J. Frank Parnell's got some junk in the trunk.

nature of the job, though he spends a lot of time dodging bullets and baseball bats, particularly when working alongside Lite (Sy Richardson), an imposing badass who will do whatever is needed to do the job. "Someone crosses me, I'll kill 'em," he says.

One day, Otto offers a ride to a young woman running down the street. Leila (Olivia Barash) is headed to the United Fruitcake Outlet, a covert outfit where she works. She tells Otto that she is being followed by government agents because she has evidence of aliens that were smuggled from an Air Force base in the trunk of a Chevy Malibu, showing Otto less-than-convincing photographic proof of their existence. She's part of a group that wants to go public with the news as soon as the car, being driven from Los Alamos by a lobotomized scientist named J. Frank Parnell (Fox Harris), arrives in L.A. "We're going to have a press conference and tell the world!" she excitedly tells Otto who can't contain his laughter.

When the repo men at the Helping Hands Acceptance Corporation learn about a \$20,000 bounty on the Malibu, they assume it's loaded with illegal cargo, and they are not alone in its pursuit. The Rodriguez brothers, the government agents, the UFO enthusiasts, Otto's punk friends who periodically show up to rob liquor stores, and even the TV preacher all want to get their hands on the car as though it's The One Ring. A few of the greedy get incinerated by the contents of its trunk. In the end, everyone descends on the HHAC yard like it's Judgement Day. The highly radioactive Chevy Malibu, now a garish Day-Glo green, sits parked, awaiting the faithful.

It's a surprisingly optimistic ending, although not the one writer/director Alex Cox initially envisioned. It's an outcome reminiscent of the way *Shaun of the Dead* poked fun at humanity in its opening sequences: the rat race had already transformed people into zombies. In *Repo Man*, there is nothing left to fear because 1980s L.A. is already a wasteland, destroyed by greed and excess.

Just as the repo men stand apart from ordinary people, so, too, does *Repo Man* stand apart from ordinary films. The plot is so wonderfully weird. Cox drew aesthetic inspiration from underground comic books from the 60s and 70s. The movie is endlessly quotable (and I hope that “Repo man’s got all night, every night” found its way into the late Harry Dean Stanton’s eulogy). All of the characters, even the most minor ones, are captivating. And, I don’t think the filmmakers could have assembled a better cast.



Worlds are colliding.

To pitch this cinematic oddity to potential investors, Cox storyboarded the script like a comic book, though he only finished four pages. It was, however, enough to capture the interest of ex-Monkees guitarist, Mike Nesmith, who in turn pitched it to Universal. While not normally the kind of movie a major studio goes for, Bob Rheme, a former collaborator of B-Movie King, Roger Corman, green lit the picture, but with the stipulation that the production team foot the bill and give Universal the option to buy after viewing the finished product. [Cox said](#) he had preferred (and probably still does) to make movies as cheaply as possible to avoid the kinds of investors that might derail the creative vision.



Plutonium Green is a custom order.

And derail, Universal did. When Bob Rheme left, the studio dumped most of his pending projects and sabotaged others,. There was no marketing behind *Repo Man*, and it was pulled after just one week in theaters, almost dooming it to a fate of straight-to-video obscurity. In a sort of *Damn the Man* twist, the movie was saved by the popularity of its soundtrack, which included punk legends like Black Flag, Suicidal Tendencies, Fear, and the Circle Jerks. The Plugz added a twangy score that gave the film a sort of a Spaghetti Western feel. And Iggy Pop was given free reign to write the title song, which he credits with reviving his career. In six months, soundtrack sales topped 50,000 copies, forcing the studio to bring it back to theaters. Critics praised the film.

A sequel was planned with Emilio Esteves and Harry Dean Stanton reprising their roles, but Esteves pulled out because he thought the script made no sense. Cox published the script online in the hopes of generating from potential collaborators, and while some amateurs filmmakers in Texas took a shot, that also fell apart. In the end, *Waldo’s Hawaiian Holiday* saw the light of day as a comic book written by Cox, and illustrated by Christopher Bones and Justin Randall. More recently, *Repo Man* [got an excellent Criterion release](#) that faithfully adheres in just about every way to the spirit of this wonderfully, weird cult punk classic.

GIRLS, ON FILM

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