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Wednesday 4th DECEMBER 2002 (8th Week)

COMING

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cinema review

Anita and Me
Odeon George St. until Thursday 5th

'Anita and Me', a tale of an alienated young Asian growing up in Britain, will inevitably draw comparisons with other east-meets-west comedy dramas such as 'East is East' and 'Bend It Like Beckham' - but its portrayal of a young girl's first encounters with small-town prejudice is just as indebted to 'To Kill a Mockingbird'. There is even, in tribute to that film, a Boo Radley figure: the mysterious 'Yeti' who emerges from his gothic mansion only at night.

It is 1972. Meena, the 'Me' of the title, is a pre-adolescent girl living in Tollington, a Black Country microcosm of Little England, where the local shopkeeper (Lynne Redgrave) claims to 'know about the world' because she has been to Brighton and was 'the first in this village to taste a scallop'. Meena's extended Punjabi family wants her to be well educated and steeped in their traditions, but Meena just wants to listen to rock and roll, eat fish and chips, and aspires to being a 'blonde writer'. So when precocious blonde misfit and 'groovy chick' Anita moves in next door, Meena has a new best friend and role model. Only the visit of Meena's eccentric grandmother (Zohra Sehgal) from India, and a spate of racist incidents in Tollington, leads Meena to reassess who she is and who she wants to be.

The script of 'Anita and Me' has been adapted by Meera Syal from her own novel, and it has all the witty observations on ethnicity that you might expect from one of the writers of 'Goodness Gracious Me'. Yet Syal, who also appears in the film as the monstrous Auntie, has seasoned the film's humour with moments of real sadness, and occasional wonder.

Director Metin Huseyin manages to capture the spirit of '70s England without wallowing in a nostalgic whitewash, and the combination of Meena's wry narration and the film's vibrant colours conveys perfectly the perspective of a growing girl. The cast is excellent, with newcomers Chandev Uppal (as Meena) and Anna Brewster (as Anita) meriting special attention.

Like all good films about the past, 'Anita and Me' is also a film about the present. See it, and decide for yourself whether this nation has really grown up.

Anton Bitel, 2.12.02

MEETINGS / LECTURES

PUBLICIZE YOUR SOCIETY HERE! Put YOUR meetings or lectures up - immediately, any time and free - at www.dailyinfo.co.uk. Queries to dailyinfo@dailyinfo.co.uk

OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS / Weekly 12 Step meeting for anyone with an eating disorder. / 7.30pm - 8.30pm / West Oxford Community Centre, Botley Road

OXFORD GEMELAN SOCIETY / Play the enchanting bronze orchestra of Javan Beginners welcome / Balfour Building, 60, Banbury Road, Oxford. Contact: Martyn Bull 01235 815470 or Pete Smith 01865 510815 / 6pm Balfour Building, 60 Banbury Road, Oxford / Wed: 6pm / Email: martyn.bull@rl.ac.uk

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MATTHEW COLLINGS, PART OF 'STATE OF THE ARTS' SERIES / Writer, author and presenter / £5 / £2, places limited / 7.30pm / Modern Art Oxford, 30 Pembroke Street. Opening times: Closed Mondays, Tues-Sat: 11am-5pm, Sun: 12-5pm. Tel: 722733. Fax: 722573. Email: generalenquiry@oma.demon.co.uk

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I n the Beginning

Nobody knows quite how Oxford University originated, though many believe it to have been started by teachers and students expelled from the University of Paris.

For many years University College maintained a claim to have been founded by King Alfred, and to have been the original college. Merton also has strong claim to this distinction.

To this day University and Merton are kept apart at matriculation ceremonies, as there has been some trouble in the past when more than one Dean has claimed the right, as Dean of the oldest college represented, to make the address.

In any case, Oxford was well established as an academic centre by the end of the twelfth century; a prior of Worcester, writing in 1190, described it as "abounding in men skilled in mystic eloquence, weighing the words of the law, bringing forth from their treasures things new and old."

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Michael Caine in potentially Oscar-winning performance
ANITA AND ME (12A) Daily: 2.00, 4.15, 6.45, 9.00
A young Asian girl and her dubious role model. See review, above right

HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS (PG)
Daily: 12.00, 1.30, 3.45, 5.00, 7.30, 8.30

Part two of seven.... will she write them all?
DIE ANOTHER DAY (12A) Daily: 11.45, 2.15, 2.45, 5.15, 5.45, 8.15, 8.45

The New James Bond. See review at www.dailyinfo.co.uk
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28 DAYS LATER (18) Daily: 3.30, 8.30
Zombie future horror plague. See review at www.dailyinfo.co.uk

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