Oxford's DAILY INFO

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Next issue: Thu 23rd October
Deadline: 10am, Wed 22nd October

Tue 21st & Wed 22nd October 2008 (2nd week)

WHAT'S ON / COMING SOON

the corner club
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Presenting an exclusive evening
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7.30pm 'til very late, Thursday 23rd October, 2008
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Tickets: £15 at www.onlyconnect.me.uk. *Smart attire only please*

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A funny, unsentimental look at life, death and poetry.
October 22 - 25, Wed - Sat 8pm, Sat matinee 2.30pm
The North Wall Arts Centre, South Parade, OX2 7NN
Tickets: £12, £10, £8 Conc, Box Office **01865 319450**
www.thenorthwall.com

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Sat 22 Nov 10.30am – 3.30pm
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CINEMA to Thu 23rd

Ultimate Picture Palace (245288)

MAN ON WIRE [15] ✍ Mon: 6.00, 8.15pm, Tue - Thu: 7.00, 9.15pm
Docu-drama about wire-walk between the twin towers.

Odeon George St (0871 2244 007)

TROPIC THUNDER [15] ✍ Mon & Tue: 12.30, 3.30, 6.15, 9.00pm
Actors in a war film are dropped into a real-life combat situation.

EAGLE EYE [12A] Mon - Thu: 2.30, 5.30, 8.45pm
Two strangers are watched and manipulated.

I'VE LOVED YOU SO LONG [12A] ✍ Mon & Tue: 8.00pm
A woman returns to her family after 15 years.

THE ROCKER [12A] daily: 1.00, 3.45, 6.30, 9.15pm
A failed drummer is given a second chance at fame.

MIRRORS [15] Mon & Tue: 3.00, 6.00, 8.30pm; Wed & Thu: 11.45am, 8.00pm
Evil force uses mirrors as doorways.

HOW TO LOSE FRIENDS AND ALIENATE PEOPLE [15] ✍ daily: 2.15, 5.15, 8.15pm
Simon Pegg plays irritating man.

IGOR [PG] daily: 12.45, 3.15, 5.45pm
Famous voices in animation about scientist's assistant with aspirations.

SENIOR SCREEN: JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH [PG] Wed: 10.45am
Latest adaptation of Jules Verne.

HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL 3 [U] Wed & Thu: 12.00, 3.00, 6.00, 9.00pm
A final spring musical before heading to college.

BURN AFTER READING [15] Wed & Thu: 1.00, 3.30, 6.00, 8.30pm
Mildly comic farce from the Coens.

Odeon Magdalen St (0871 2244 007)

THE HOUSE BUNNY [12A] Mon: 12.30, 3.00, 5.30, 8.00pm; Tue: 12.30, 3.00, 5.30pm; Wed & Thu: 12.30, 5.30pm
Playboy Bunny helps clueless sorority girls save their house.

BURN AFTER READING [15] Mon & Tue: 1.00, 3.30, 6.00, 8.30pm
Mildly comic farce from the Coens.

PRICELESS [12A] ✍ Tue: 8.00pm
Gold-digger thinks bartender is millionaire.

TROPIC THUNDER [15] ✍ Wed & Thu: 3.00, 8.30pm
Actors in a war film are dropped into a real-life combat situation.

HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL 3 [U] Wed & Thu: 11.00, 2.00, 5.00, 8.00pm
A final spring musical before heading to college.

Phoenix Picture House (0870 758 3218)

BURN AFTER READING [15] Mon & Tue, Thu: 1.30, 4.00, 6.30, 8.45pm; Wed: 1.50, 4.00, 6.30, 8.45pm
Mildly comic farce from the Coens.

GOMORRAH [15] ✍ Mon - Wed: 12.15, 3.30, 9.00pm; Thu: 12.15, 3.30, 6.15, 9.00pm
True life stories about Italy's modern crime families. Subtitled.

I'VE LOVED YOU SO LONG [12A] ✍ Tue & Wed: 6.20pm
A woman returns to her family after 15 years.

FRENCH CINEMA: MES AMIS, MES AMOURS [15] Mon: 6.45pm
Two divorced fathers move to "Frog Alley"

BIG SCREAM: BURN AFTER READING [15] Wed: 11.30am
Mildly comic farce from the Coens.

Saïd Business School (289936)

BURNING AN ILLUSION Thu: 7.15pm
OU Black History Month Event. Free

Vue Cinema (08712 240 240)

TROPIC THUNDER [15] ✍ Mon & Tue: 5.15, 8.00pm
Actors are dropped into a real-life combat situation.

IGOR [PG] Mon & Tue: 1.00, 3.10, 5.30, 7.45pm; Wed & Thu: 10.50am, 1.00, 3.10, 5.30, 7.45pm
Famous voices in animation about scientist's assistant with aspirations.

MAMMA MIA [PG] ✍ Mon & Tue: 1.30, 4.00, 6.30, 9.00pm
Meryl Streep in ABBA-fuelled fun.

THE HOUSE BUNNY [12A] Tue: 2.30, 5.00pm; Wed & Thu: 12.10, 2.30, 5.00pm
Playboy Bunny helps sorority girls.

HOW TO LOSE FRIENDS AND ALIENATE PEOPLE [15] ✍ Mon & Tue: 3.20, 5.40, 8.15pm; Wed & Thu: 5.40, 8.15pm
Simon Pegg plays irritating man.

TAKEN [15] ✍ Mon & Tue: 2.15, 4.45, 7.30, 9.50pm; Wed & Thu: 7.30, 9.50pm
Agent's daughter is kidnapped.

MIRRORS [15] Mon & Tue: 7.15, 9.40pm
Evil force uses mirrors as doorways.

CITY OF EMBER [PG] Mon & Tue: 2.50pm; Wed & Thu: 12.30, 2.50pm
Can two children save the city?

BURN AFTER READING [15] Mon & Tue: 2.00, 4.30, 6.45, 9.15pm; Wed & Thu: 11.45am, 2.00, 4.30, 6.45, 9.15pm
Mildly comic farce from the Coens.

THE ROCKER [12A] Mon - Thu: 1.10, 3.45, 6.20, 8.45pm
A failed drummer is given a second chance at fame.

EAGLE EYE [12A] Mon & Tue: 3.00, 5.50, 8.30pm; Wed & Thu: 12.20, 3.00, 5.50, 8.30pm
Two strangers are watched and manipulated.

SENIORS CLUB: THE FOX AND THE CHILD [U] Tue: 12.00pm
Young girl meets a wild fox.

HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL 3 [U] Wed & Thu: 10.30am, 12.00, 12.40, 1.20, 2.40, 3.20, 4.10, 5.20, 6.10, 7.00, 8.00, 9.00, 9.40pm
A final spring musical before heading to college.

✍ = **review** on www.dailyinfo.co.uk

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THEATRE to Sat 25th

New Theatre, Oxford (0844 8471585)

THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES Tue 21st: 7.30pm
Now famous in over 25 countries. Age 15+. £17

LET'S HANG ON Thu 23rd: 7.30pm
The songs of Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons. £14.50/ £16

SHAOLIN MONKS - WHEEL OF LIFE ✍ Sat 25th: 7.30pm
The masters of Kung-Fu demonstrate incredible feats of strength and skill. £14.50- £25

Burton Taylor Studio (305305)

BOX OF TRICKS Tue 21st - Sat 25th: 8pm
"Magic duo Rhys & Rob demonstrate the full potential of the human mind & body." £5/£4

Oxford Playhouse (305305)

MY BRILLIANT DIVORCE Mon 20th: 7.30pm
By Geraldine Aron with award-winning comedienne Dillie Keane. £11.50 -£18.50

ENNIO MARCHETTO ✍ Tue 21st: 7.30pm
The Living Cartoon. £11.50 -£18.50

HAVE BOX WILL TRAVEL Wed 22nd: 1.30pm, 7pm
Semi-autobiographical story written and performed by Charlie Dark. £13/£10

CHARLES SIMONYI LECTURE: THE PURPOSE OF PURPOSE Thu 23rd: 5.30pm
Richard Dawkins speaks. £3.50

VICTOR SPINETTI'S A VERY PRIVATE DIARY... REVISITED! Fri 24th: 8pm
Comedy, gossip & revelations. £11.50 -£18.50

MANY HAPPY RETURNERS Sat 25th: 7.30pm
The Playhouse's highlights from its birth to today. Libby Purves hosts. £15-£30.

Pegasus Theatre (722851)

BEYONCE STOP PUNCHING ROBBIE! Thu 23rd: 8pm
Comedy about ageing and being in a failing marriage whilst holding down a stressful teaching job. With Bollywood choreography. £10.

Cellar Bar (244761)

REGINALD D HUNTER ✍ Mon 20th: 9.15pm
Star of Never Mind The Buzzcocks. £7/£5

F*CK ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER Wed 22nd: 7.45pm
An hour of intricate plots and songs, based on audience suggestions. £5/£4, 18+

North Wall Arts Centre (319450)

WIT Wed 22nd - Fri 24th: 8.00pm, Sat 25th: 2.30 & 8.00pm
The story of an academic cancer patient and her love of John Donne's poetry. £12/£10

The Theatre At Headington (759138)

THE DEATH AND LIFE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES Thu 23rd: 7.30pm
Roger Llewellyn stars. £12/£10

OFS Studio (0844 847 2360 new Oct 08!)

PROOF Tue 21st - Fri 24th: 7.30pm, Sat 25th: 2.30, 7.30pm
A young woman is haunted by her father's past & the shadow of her own future. £9/£7

St Mary Magdalen Church (01993 813325)

SAMSON AGONISTES Sat 25th: 7.30pm
To celebrate the 400th Anniversary of John Milton: with voice, lute and flute. Free.

JOBS OFFERED

The Old Bank Hotel
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WEB DEVELOPER REQUIRED. http://www.obergine.com/jobs.aspx

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SOS Sahel UK
Finance Manager (4 days per week)
£32 – 35K (80% pro-rata) - Oxford based
African development charity SOS Sahel UK seeks a dynamic and experienced Finance Manager to join its team. This opportunity would suit a CCAB qualified accountant looking to expand their experience, covering all aspects of financial and risk management in a small development organisation. Experience of the voluntary sector and the UK charity statutory framework would be advantageous, as well as reporting to institutional donors. Excellent analytical, interpersonal and communication skills are essential.
See: http://www.sahel.org.uk/jobs.htm
Closing date: 5pm, Wednesday 29 October 2008
Interviews: Thursday 6 November 2008

270 more on www.dailyinfo.co.uk

WORK WANTED

STUDENT LOOKING FOR part time work: experienced waiter and bar man, also 18 months' experience in tele call centre. Ring Ollie Gibbs: 07515 775122.

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

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FOOD REVIEW

The Black Boy

91 Old High St, Headington, OX3 9HT. Phone: 741137

Tue - Thu 12-3pm & 6-11pm, Fri - Sat 12-11pm, Sun 12-10.30pm, closed Monday.

I have no idea what the Black Boy was like before its recent barstaurant makeover, but the owners have clearly put a lot of love and cash into making it what it is now: a simply classy joint with cuisine to match.

Given the giant silver flock wallpaper, huge mirrors and arty Scandiwegian lighting, you'd be forgiven for thinking you'd wandered into an upmarket London bar, so it's a surprise and a relief to find the prices comfortably within the average pub dining bracket (mains are all £5 - £10). The menu comprises trad. pub favourites (fish and chips, steaks, burgers, pasta, pizzas) and more exotic dishes (scallop feillentine, ham hock terrine, gnocchi, foie gras parfait) to lend that little bit of extra flair and style that turns a pub into into a gastropub. Service is excellent, the staff managing to be professional as well as friendly and attentive. As for the food: the goat's cheese salad (£4.50) was small, with the right combination of richness and tanginess not overpowered by too much dressing on the pleasantly herby, fresh salad. The pork belly was well cooked and flavoursome, though the mash could have had a little more character; the haddock fishcakes (£8.95 main, £5.50 starter) were generous and tasty and - whilst a little heavy on the dill for my own personal taste - certainly didn't skimp on meaty fish content. The Italian pinot grigio (£16.95) washed things down well, particularly complementing the unexpected jewel in the crown: the sticky toffee pudding (£4.95). What can often be like a small lead weight was in this instance a light, fluffy concoction with a tart edge provided by chunks of orange and offset by just enough vanilla ice cream. (We could have eaten one each, which is saying something.) The wine list is shortish but good, though the markup is clearly where the pub will be making most of its income (though who can blame them for that - they can't be making much on the insanely reasonably-priced food!).

This place appears to be doing everything right so far, even down to having a regular weekly quiz and a jazz night to get more bums on seats - which might go some way to creating the only thing that's (undeservedly) lacking: a lively atmosphere. Chances are high, though, that if the Black Boy continues to provide such decent grub at such good value, this peaceful window will be shortlived. You might be wise to get in there before it's so lively that you can't get a table.

Su Jordan 17/10/08

Please don't discover this pub.

You don't want to eat the delicious food, at brilliant prices. You definitely don't want to try the steak (£9.95), which I wrestled from my boyfriend. And when you're not coming here, and not eating the steak, you should also not eat the goats' cheese salad (£4.50), nor the fishcakes (£5.50).

You don't want to try the exciting wine list, you certainly don't want to chat to the friendly and enthusiastic staff, and the last thing you want to do is spend a fabulous evening in a gorgeous pub with a great atmosphere.

Coming to the Black Boy would be a very bad thing to do, as I might not be able to get a table next time.

Kate, 15/10/08

We went to check out the NEW Black Boy, and WOW were we impressed! The new management team have done really well - the food was great and service was second to none. Keep up the good work - we'll sure be back again and again!

Anon. 13/10/08

Just been to the Black Boy - the new owners have got it absolutely spot on. The food was excellent, perfect steak and chips for under £10, and plenty more appetising stuff on the menu, a bargain. Great service, much improved decor, the only blemish was only one choice of ale (Old Speckled Hen) although another draft was promised soon. I'll definitely be going back, and hopefully it will be a bit busier, as it certainly deserves to be.

rd, 08/10/08

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LECTURES & MEETINGS

Tue 21st

A CAREER AT THE BAR / The Honourable Society of the Inner Temple presentation. / Freud Cafe, Walton St. / 7pm / Panel followed by canapés and wine reception: talk to barristers of varying seniority / To reserve a place email: presentations%innertemple.org.uk or call 020 7797 8211 for information.

KNITTING GROUP / All levels welcome, even beginners. / 6 - 7.30pm (or longer) / sa.bradley%hotmail.co.uk / The Jam Factory, 27 Park End St, OX1 1HU. 244613

MUJERES HISPANOPARLANTES / Nos reuniremos para intercambiar impresiones. / 6.30pm / menchi%hotmail.co.uk / 07726 465461 / Lamb & Flag, 12 St Giles, OX1 3JS

CORPORATIONS EMBEDDED IN SOCIETIES / 2nd of 3 lectures on Corporations, Games & Societies by Prof. Masahiko Aoki. / Clarendon Lectures in Management Studies 2008 / 5.15pm, free, all welcome / 353650 / Saïd Business School, Park End St

WHAT'S LEFT OF PLACE? / 1st of 3 lectures on Voices of Places by Prof. Doreen Massey / Clarendon Lectures in Geography 2008 / 5pm, free, all welcome / 353650 / O'Reilly Theatre, Keble College

THE EVOLUTION OF DNA REPLICATION / Inaugural Lecture by the Professor of Microbiology, Professor Stephen D Bell. / 5pm / Examination Schools, High St

VERO INTRODUCTORY MEETING / Film, discussion, veggie refreshments. Info about events & campaign. / 5 - 6.30pm / www.vero.org.uk / Mansfield College, Seminar Room East.

MAJOLICA AND DELFTWARE / Introductory talk, booking essential. / 1.15 - 2pm. Free, or £2 donation / 278015 to book / Ashmolean Museum, Beaumont St.

THE CHANGING WORLD OF BUTTERFLIES / Jim Asher / Ashmolean Natural HIstory Society / 8pm, non-members £2 / 762951 / Earth Sciences Dept., Parks Road

THE GOD DELUSION DEBATE II / Dawkins discusses science & religion / 7pm / Museum of Natural History, Parks Rd / 272970

OXFORD LEFT ALTERNATIVE / Branch meeting / Free 7.30pm / www.oxfordrespect.org.uk / 07985 056089 / Town Hall, Oxford, St Aldates / 249811

YOU, SUCCESS & THE INTERNET / Graham Jones, Internet Psychologist (Oxford Yes Group) / 7-10pm £5 (£4 conc) / www.oxfordyesgroup.org / 07765 480625 / 43 St. Giles

Wed 22nd

PLACES IN A REVOLUTION / 2nd of three lectures on Voices of Places by Prof. Doreen Massey / Clarendon Lectures in Geography 2008 / 5pm, free, all welcome / 353650 / O'Reilly Theatre, Keble College

TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE THROUGH TECHNOLOGY / The opportunity for entrepreneurs / Green Breakfasts / 7.30am (presentation 8am) / Blake Lapthorn offices, Seacourt Tower, West Way, Botley

TIBETAN BUDDHIST MEDITATION / 7pm, free / www.dwbuk.org / 07972 793066 / North Ox. Community Centre, Ferry Centre, Diamond Place, Summertown, OX2 7DP

HOW DID THEIR GARDENS GROW? / Sacred & private gardens of Ancient Egypt, with Linda Farrar. Booking required. / 2 - 4pm, £5 (inc afternoon tea) / Headley Lecture Theatre, Ashmolean Museum, Beaumont St.

OXFORD GEEK NIGHT #9 / Local web developers, designers, programmers meet, drink, hear talks / 19.30-22.30, free / Jericho Tavern, 56 Walton St / 311775

ON LAW AND GLOBALIZATION / Clarendon Law Lectures 2008 - Dean Harold Koh. Free / Lecture 1: 5pm - 5.45pm / Lecture 2: 6.15pm - 7pm / 353164 / Gulbenkian Lecture Theatre, St. Cross Building

CORPORATIONS & SOCIETIES CO-EVOLVING / 3rd of three lectures on Corporations, Games & Societies by Prof. Masahiko Aoki. / Clarendon Lectures in Management Studies 2008 / 5.15pm, free, all welcome / 353650 / Saïd Business School, Park End St

WHAT MAKES US HUMAN? / Robin Dunbar looks at human evolution. / 7.30pm £3/SO Friends free / 728953 / Science Oxford, 1 - 5 London Place, St Clements

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CINEMA REVIEW

The House Bunny [12A]

Showing at the Odeon Magdalen St & the Vue Cinema until at least Thu 23rd. See Cinema listings, below left.

The plot of this movie bears a very strong resemblance to *Legally Blonde*, and there's a reason for that – it was written by the same people, Kirsten Smith and Karen McCullah Lutz. This time it's not a waspy boyfriend but the entire east coast Ivy League college system who need to be taught a lesson – the lesson being that brains are no substitute for breasts if you want to be a successful woman in today's America.

Shelley Darlingson is a bunny enjoying the chaste and fun-loving lifestyle of the Playboy Mansion (really) when she is brutally booted out for being too old. Out on the streets in her high heels and minute spangly costumes, she somehow manages to become a house mother at a college sorority house which is about to be closed down because the girls are so plain and socially inept that no-one wants to be in it. Shelley predictably turns this around with her instant makeovers and party know-how; but, alas, she is less successful at developing a relationship with a real man.

It does have redeeming features – Anna Faris as Shelley is very good and very funny, so is Emma Stone and so is Katharine McPhee (who really is an excellent singer) and most of the supporting cast. It is quite amusing to spot who is related to whom – the movie also features Colin (son of Tom) Hanks, and Rumer (daughter of Bruce) Willis. It also has elements that are so weird that the Coen brothers couldn't have written them any weirder – notably Hugh Hefner appearing as himself and the bizarre concept that the Playboy mansion exists in order to provide a carefree home for intellectually challenged sweet-natured bunny girls. It certainly has nothing to do with sex or exploitation, and in fact is presented as an extremely luxurious old people's home.

I hope that the movie's presentation of contemporary college life is equally inaccurate, because it was deeply scary. It isn't in the same league as *Legally Blonde*, but it does have one or two funny lines – if you've seen the trailer then you've seen them, basically. There is no more to it than that.

Andrea Hopkins

GEOGRAPHICAL ASSISTANCE

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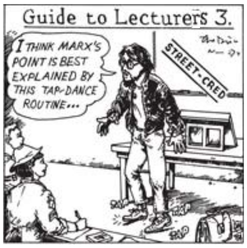

GIGS

Tue 21st

BRING ME THE HORIZON, SECRET HANDSHAKE, DEEZ NUTS, DEAD SWANS / 7pm. £11 / Carling Academy Oxford, 190 Cowley Rd / 0844 477 2000

ROGUE DOLLS / 8pm-2am. Free / Bullingdon Arms, 162 Cowley Rd / 244516

RANDOM HAND, MIKE TV, DEADBEAT CAVALIER, EXP / 7pm £6 / Carling Academy Oxford, 190 Cowley Rd / 0844 477 2000

Wed 22nd

DECIMALS, SECRET RIVALS, THEN WE TAKE BERLIN / 6.30pm. £5 / Carling Academy Oxford, 190 Cowley Rd / 0844 477 2000

REGGAE WEDNESDAYS ROOTS & DUB / Reggae Vibes / Everyone Welcome / / 8pm - 12.30 £2 entry / 792168 / East Oxford Community Centre, 44b Princes St OX4 1DD

VIXENS, PALACE / 8pm. £4 / The Wheatsheaf, Wheatsheaf Alley, 129 High St / 721156

THE COURTEENERS / 7pm, £13.50 adv / Carling Academy Oxford, 190 Cowley Rd

ROLO TOMASSI + IVY'S ITCH / 8.30pm £4/5 / 241261 / The Regal, 300 Cowley Rd

DANCEHALL NICE AGAIN / DJ Baps & Nico D / 8pm - 12am, Free / 07813 355448 / James St Tavern

LADY SLAM - SPOKEN WORD EVENT / Starring Ali Brumfitt & Tonguetide / Hosted by Lizzie Mc / Sign up 7.30 Starts 8pm £5/4 / Exeter Hall, 1 Oxford Rd / 776431

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South Park, 8th November

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If you like to go out in South Park,
And watch things go bang in the dark,
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Two of our entries so far.
Can you do better? If so:
Email fireworks@dailyinfo.co.uk
or submit online at www.dailyinfo.co.uk

Boom Boom
Fireworks
A Flash of Light
Twinkle Twinkle
In the Night
A Puff of Smoke
A Gust of Wind
Sparkle Sparkle
She Turned and Grinned
A Night of Magic
A Day of Joy
A Scene of Wonder
The Perfect Toy

suedeonym, 19/10/08

As night creeps in and day makes its retreat
And I breathe in the smoke and wish for warm feet
As I listen to sparklers fizz and the fire roar
And delight in the fireworks and the crowd's furore
I wonder how much people know, or not
About Guy Fawkes and the gunpowder plot

He was part of a catholic revolutionary group
That instigated this historical failed coup
to destroy parliament during its state opening
because help for the recusants wasn't forthcoming.
When caught he was tortured for three days, or more
And was sent to die through the gallows door
after being hung drawn and quartered,
punished to death and being slowly slaughtered
but do you remember, of what you were told
that he managed to jump, off the scaffold
and break his neck before enduring such pain
ready to commence 4000 years of fame.

Mary Watson, 18/10/08

CINEMA REVIEW

Burn After Reading [15]

Showing at most Oxford Cinemas until at least Thu 23rd. See Cinema listings, below left.

Burn After Reading is fluffy and tasty and has hard bits that stick in your teeth. It's popcorn – Coen Brothers style.

After their Oscar-winning heavyweight *No Country For Old Men*, the brothers breeze away in a bouncy shaggy dog story that contains all the Coen brothers' essentials: would-be conmen, quirky characters and cruel violence. It's another morality tale. Ordinary Joes who, sensing a quick buck, make a silly decision which sucks them into a murky world of crime and punishment for which they're wholly unprepared.

It could be *Fargo* or *No Country For Old Men*. Two employees of the Hardbodies sports centre find a CD in their locker room. Seeing that it contains the memoirs of a shadowy government spy, they see a chance to make some money. Airhead trainer Brad Pitt is gung ho to blackmail the writer. Secretary Frances McDormand is keen to pay for cosmetic surgery and goes along with it.

Having seen spy movies, they think they know how it goes. But the ex-spook, John Malkovich, is in a murderous mood. And when McDormand's next lonely-hearts online date turns out to be bumbling agent George Clooney, the scene is set for a farce of tragic-comic proportions. A story of dildos and daft double-dealings, it's an easy ride.

Pitt and Clooney have a blast sending up their smooth personas. And their broad slapstick sets the tone. Opening with brooding Bourne-style credits – dramatic music and hi-tech text – *Burn After Reading* sends up the spy-thriller genre. Malkovich is more affronted than worried by Pitt's cack-handed espionage. Even the Russians are non-plussed when McDormand passes the CD to them.

All the more shocking then when the violence erupts. A Coen brothers essential, it sees the innocent and foolhardy get more than they deserve. Like the stories of Flannery O'Connor, or the paintings of Bosch, curious characters and cruelty combine to leave a salty but sour taste.

Pratfalls aside, the best humour's to be had from the government chief who can't understand how the storm-in-a-teacup arose. 'Come back to me when it makes sense', he says. It's the Coen brothers' nod-and-a-wink to the audience. And Malkovich's foul-mouthed agent almost steals the show.

Clever and quirky, cruel and creative – the Coen brothers make quality films. And *Burn After Reading* is one of them, but by no means their best. Yet unlike the amoral movies of Tarantino, the Coen brothers have a keen humanity which always shines through.

This is popcorn then, but not as we know it.

Glenn Watson

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