FilmFirst

FREE PREVIEWS

THE JACKET

Adrien Brody and Keira Knightley star in the harrowing psychological thriller, The Jacket It will be released on Friday, May 13 but you can see it before the crowd by claiming two free tickets to one of 16 preview screenings this Sunday.

To claim your free tickets, call the following number and enter the code of your chosen cinema from the list below. You will be given a reference number to write on the voucher, which you must present at the screening.

0870 909 3799

(National rate. Lines open from 9am until midnight tonight.)

PICTUREHOUSE CINEMAS SUNDAY, MAY 8. 10.30AM FOR 11AM START.
ABERDEEN BELMONT 001 | **BATH** LITTLE THEATRE 002
BRIGHTON DUKE OF YORKS 003 | **CAMBRIDGE** ARTS PICTUREHOUSE 004
CRAWLEY EAST GRINSTEAD PICTUREHOUSE 005 | **EDINBURGH** CAMEO 006
EXETER PICTUREHOUSE 007 | **LIVERPOOL** FACT PICTUREHOUSE 008
LONDON: BRIXTON RITZY CINEMA 009 | **CLAPHAM** PICTUREHOUSE 010
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STRATFORD UPON AVON PICTUREHOUSE 017 | **YORK** CITY SCREEN 018

THE TIMES
Preview screenings: The Jacket (15)

For free admission for two, present this voucher with a valid reference number at a participating Picturehouse cinema at 10.30am on Sunday, May 8.

Name .....

Reference number:

Terms and conditions 1. This voucher may be used to admit two to a private preview screening of The Jacket at 10.30am on Sunday, May 8, 2005. 2. Present this voucher, with a unique reference code, to the cashier at a participating cinema on the day of the screening to gain admittance for two people. 3. Seats are strictly subject to availability and will be allocated via the phone line on a first come first served basis. 4. Only one voucher per household. 5. Photocopies will not be accepted. 6. No cash alternative. 7. No late admittance. 8. In the event of a dispute, the cinema manager's decision is final.
To the cashier On presentation of this voucher, with a unique reference number, please admit two to the 11am screening of The Jacket on May 8. © 2004 Warner Bros Entertainment Inc. All rights reserved.

THE TIMES
JOIN THE DEBATE
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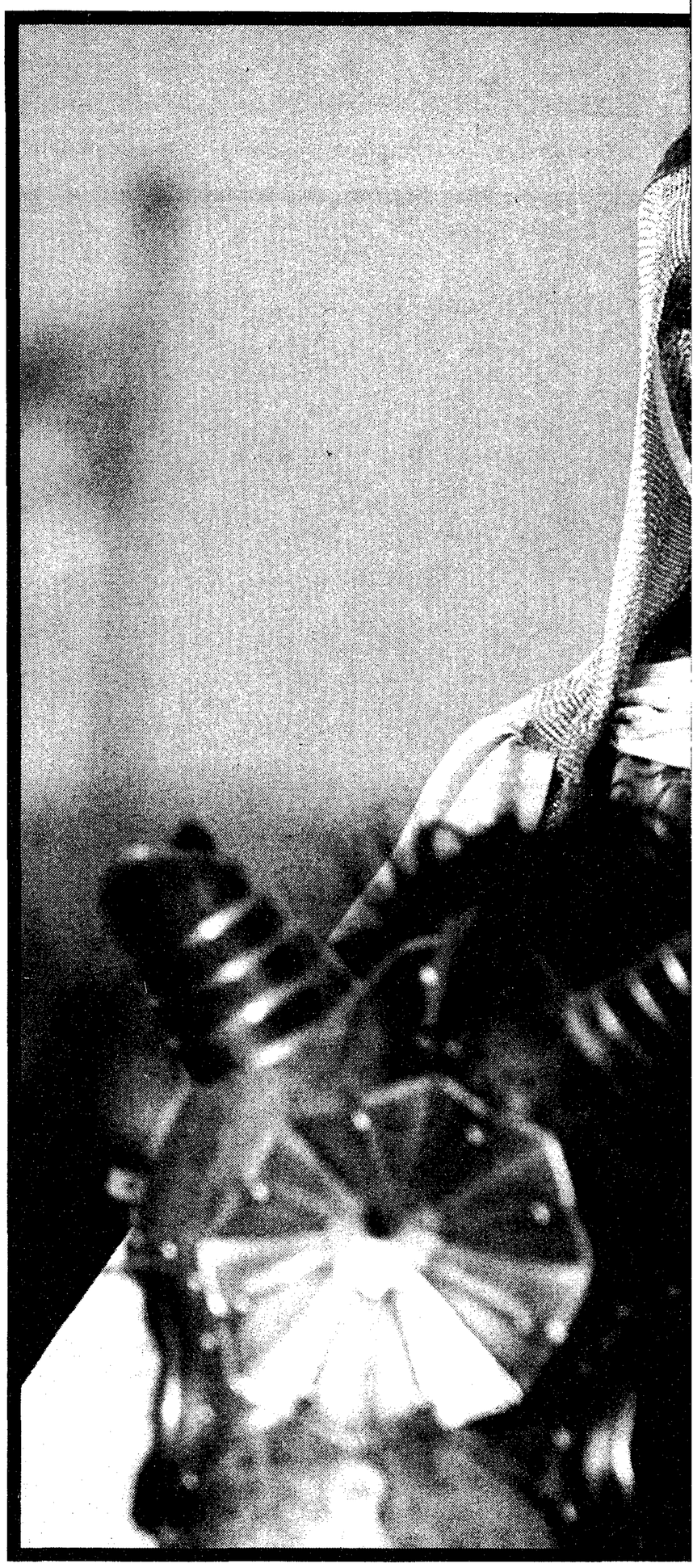
See *The Eye* on Saturday for free previews of *Only Human*

Truth is the first victim

Kingdom of Heaven has got it dramatically wrong, according to **Jonathan Riley-Smith**, the professor of Ecclesiastical History at Cambridge



PUBLIC perceptions of crusading are still based on early 19th-century attitudes, epitomised by the novelist Sir Walter Scott and the historian Joseph-François Michaud. Scott's *The Talisman* (1825), painted a picture of unsophisticated and fanatical crusaders encountering civilised and modern-minded Muslims, whose most attractive representative was the sultan, Saladin. On the other hand, Michaud's *Histoire* (1812-22), portrayed the crusaders as imperialistic heroes whose achievements heralded the rebirth of the West.

These attitudes passed into the Muslim world after the Ottoman sultan Abdulhamid II, under pressure from Russia, Austria, Britain and France, publicised in the 1890s his conviction that the West had re-embarked on the crusades. His argument was picked up by Arab nationalism, and in the past 30 years by a pan-Islamist revival which has globalised the nationalist conception of crusading. For jihadis like Osama bin Laden "crusaderism", the ambition of the old Christian enemy to destroy the faithful, has been manipulating even surrogate aggression from Zionists and Marxists.

The actuality was different. If crusades to the Levant were imperialistic, they were expressing a form of imperialism very different from the 19th-century variety, because it was governed by the need to regain or hold the ruined fragments of a cave in the middle of Jerusalem. For most crusaders there was no prospect of material gain, only great expenditure on enterprises that were arduous and dangerous. Christian holy war is abhorrent to us, but we have to accept that fact that our ancestors were attracted by a vibrant ideology, based on a coherent theology which to some extent constrained it. Crusades cannot be defined solely in terms of inter-faith relations as many of them were waged against opponents who were not Muslim, but, whatever the theatre of war, an expedition could not be launched to spread Christianity or Christian rule, but had to be a defensive reaction to an injury perpetrated by another.

Nonsense like this will only reinforce existing myths

Some of the arguments used by the propagandists look specious to us, but the fact remains that they had to make a good case, because crusading depended on the recruitment of volunteers and the public had to be convinced that a particular cause was worth while. No one could have got away with a justification as thin as that presented for the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

The makers of the *Kingdom of Heaven* follow a modified version of the constructs of Scott and Michaud. A cruel, avaricious and cowardly Christian clergy preaches hatred against the Muslims and most of the crusaders and settlers are equally stupid and fanatical. At the same time the Holy Land is portrayed as a kind of early America, a New World welcoming enterprising immigrants from an impoverished and repressive Europe. And in the midst of all the bigotry a brotherhood of liberal-minded men has vowed to create an environment in which all religions will co-exist in harmony and is in touch with Saladin, who shares its aim of peace.

This is invention. There was no brotherhood of free thinkers. There did not need to be, because within a decade or two of their occupation of Palestine the crusaders had adopted a policy of toleration, based on the Muslim treatment of subject Christians and Jews. Muslim and Jewish shrines, mosques and synagogues were open. Muslims worshipped even in Christian shrines and churches and there was at least one mosque-

HACKING THROUGH THE CRUSADER FACT AND FICTION

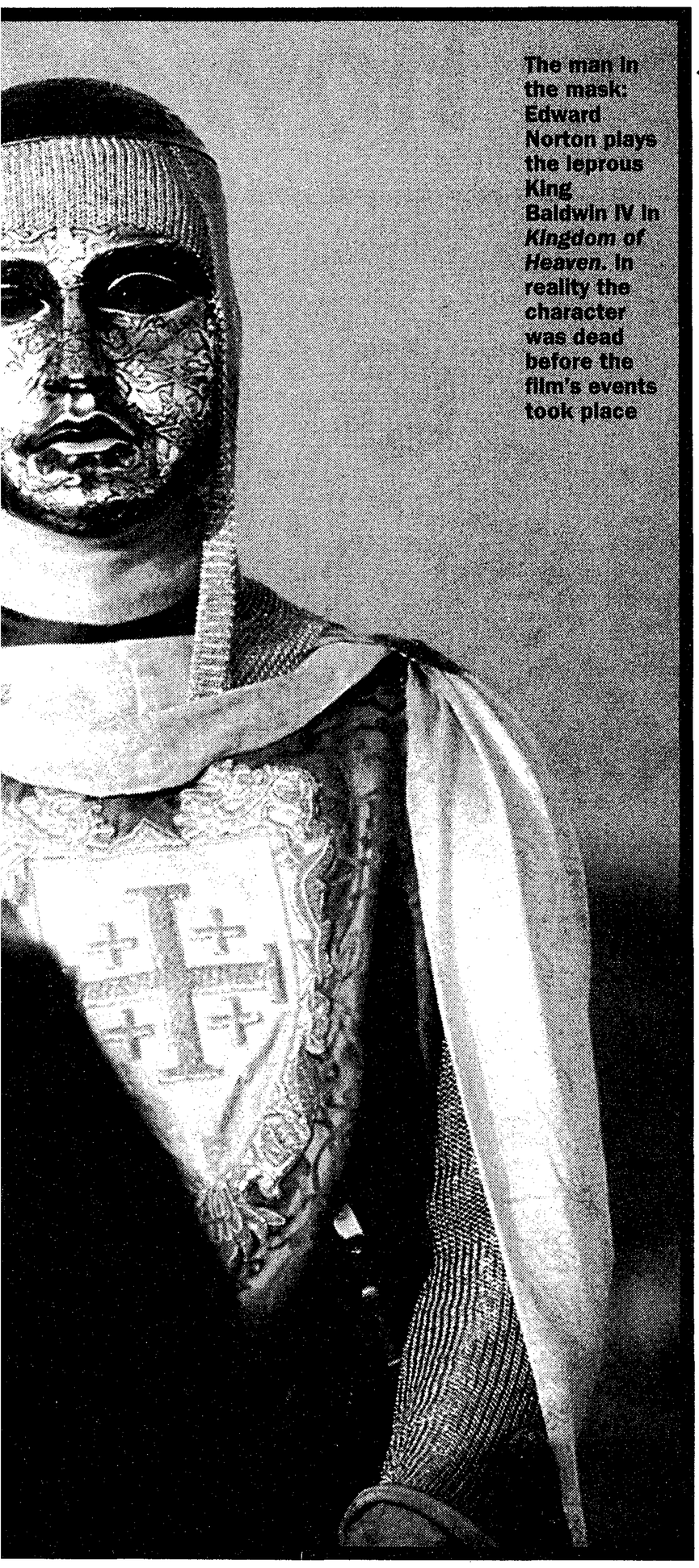
The Kingdom of Jerusalem
Fact: by the year 1186, when *Kingdom of Heaven* takes place, the crusaders had been in control of Jerusalem since 1099.
Fiction: The film opens with Muslims and crusaders coexisting in a fragile peace, but skirmishes were continuing in the region.

Balian of Ibelin (Orlando Bloom)
Fact: Balian served King Baldwin IV and helped to organise the city's defence against Saladin.
Fiction: Balian is first depicted as a humble artisan, but he was an established lord. There is no evidence that he fell in love with Sibylla, played by Eva Green.

Godfrey of Ibelin (Liam Neeson)
Fact: Many French noblemen travelled to the Holy Land to make their fortune during the crusades.
Fiction: The man who is supposed to be Balian's real father never actually existed.

King Baldwin IV (Edward Norton)
Fact: The ailing King of Jerusalem did indeed suffer from leprosy from childhood.
Fiction: Not only did Baldwin not cover his face in public, but he died a year before the events of the film take place.

Saladin (Ghassan Massoud)
Fact: The Muslim leader was generous to the enemies he respected, including Richard I.
Fiction: That didn't stop him hacking off the heads of his Christian foes when it suited.



The man in the mask: Edward Norton plays the leprous King Baldwin IV in *Kingdom of Heaven*. In reality the character was dead before the film's events took place

church. Of course the toleration was necessary if the natives were to be kept quiet, but it is a different reality from that portrayed in the film.

No one can object to romantic fiction, but the filmmakers have boasted that "authenticity coloured every facet of the production". If so, they have not had good advice; not even the city of Jerusalem is sacrosanct, with a non-existent mountain, supposedly denoting Calvary, rising incongruously out of the town. Worse, where they could have created fictional characters they have opted for real historical personalities whom they have distorted ruthlessly. The characters and careers of the hero, his lover, her husband, the king and Saladin have been re-manufactured to suit the needs of the script.

Kingdom of Heaven will feed the preconceptions of Arab nationalists and Islamists. The words and actions of the liberal brotherhood and the picture of Palestine as a Western frontier will confirm for the nationalists that medieval crusading was fundamentally about colonialism. On the other hand the fanaticism of most of the Christians in the film and their hatred of Islam is what the Islamists want to believe. At a time of inter-faith tension, nonsense like this will only reinforce existing myths.

REVIEW IN FOUR WORDS OR LESS

The Mask
Carrey on Gurning
(Rob Johnson)
Revenge of the Sith
Look! Darth Vader! Hooray!
(James Houlston-Hope)
The Sixth Sense
He's dead, you know
(Rob Gibson)
Lord of the Rings trilogy
Hobbit-forming
(Richard Cawkwell)
● Email your entries to 4words@thetimes.co.uk

Family feud for thought

NEW RELEASES **Wendy Ide** takes her hat off to the Danes, while **James Christopher**, below, puts the boot in to Palindromes

BROTHERS
15, 110 mins
★★★★☆
HEIMAT 3
15, 680 mins
★★★☆☆
MACHUCA
15, 120 mins
★★★☆☆
REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE
PG, 111 mins
★★★★★

THE Danish director Susanne Bier shares her compatriot Lars von Trier's taste for emotional anguish and human suffering. But while von Trier will often unleash a gluey torrent of melodrama that sometimes threatens to swamp his stories, Bier takes a cleaner, more restrained approach. Her latest film, **Brothers**, confirms what her previous picture, *Open Hearts*, already suggested — that Bier is one of the most assured directors of actors in her country.

It helps that the quality of the raw materials she has to work with is so exceptionally high. It is virtually impossible to write about Danish cinema without gushing about the standard of the acting. Indeed, it seems very unlikely that the whole pared-down Dogme movement would have enjoyed such longevity were it not for the wealth of Danish acting talent involved.

The brothers in this film are played (brilliantly) by Ulrich Thomsen and Nikolaj Lie Kaas. Thomsen is Michael, stalwart family man and a major in the army. He has one evening to reconnect with his black-sheep younger brother Jannik (Kaas), recently released from jail, before he has to fly out to Afghanistan with his battalion. The night unfolds like many, you suspect, before it; Michael can't help but judge his brother and Jannik folds in on himself like a sulking teenager.

But when Michael is believed killed in a helicopter crash, Jannik finds himself taking a more central role in his brother's family. He's confessor and comforter for Michael's wife (Connie Nielsen) and an overgrown older brother to the couple's two young daughters. If the Michael who returns from captivity in Afghanistan is not the same man who went away, neither is the younger brother who has found he rather likes the role of family man. Mecurial shifts in family politics are played out in the shadows of doubt and jealousy that flicker across the two men's faces.

Family tensions are at the heart of **Heimat 3**, the third heavyweight instalment of the acclaimed German television mini-series by Edgar Reitz (*see interview, page 17*). This one covers the period from the fall of the Berlin Wall until the present day, and as with the two previous *Heimats*, Reitz uses the people and events in the village of Schabbach in the Rhine valley as a microcosm to reflect the socio-political climate of Germany.

To appreciate the third instalment, I probably should first have sat through Parts 1 and 2, but that would have taken nearly 41 hours. *Heimat 3* works pretty well, nonetheless — a kind of highbrow soap opera that plays the artistic endeavours of its characters against the naked avarice of the freshly re-unified and enthusiastically capitalist new Germany. It's well worth watching, but tackling some 11 hours at the cinema seems like an unnecessary ordeal.

Political upheaval also serves as a very effective backdrop to **Machuca**, the Chilean director Andrés Wood's take on the 1973 military coup and subsequent dictatorship that divided his country (*see interview, page 19*). The film is told through the eyes of two 11-year-old boys whose vastly different social backgrounds should have precluded the friendship that develops between them. It's a vividly drawn drama that manages to avoid sentimentalism.

Rebel Without a Cause, which is re-released this week, is usually noted as the film that contains the greatest performance of James Dean's all-too-brief career. But rewatching this howl of disaffected youth, it is not just Dean's mesmerising performance that strikes; the director Nicholas Ray's extraordinarily fluid camerawork is just as much a star. He makes the film feel as alive and unpredictable as the messed-up kids it follows.

PALINDROMES
15, 100 mins
★★☆☆☆
TWIN SISTERS
12A, 137 mins
★★☆☆☆
ANDREW & JEREMY GET MARRIED
15, 75 mins
★★☆☆☆
DARWIN'S NIGHTMARE
15, 105 mins
★★★☆☆

TODD SOLONDZ is a genius of sorts. He has steered actors through ghastly roles, and outed taboos that warp our lives. He has not crafted a dull scene in his life. **Palindromes** is his latest black experiment, and it results in a thin victory of form over content.

Palindromes, as the title suggests, is a film that begins where it ends. A 12-year-old girl, Aviva (the palindrome of the title), sets her heart on becoming a mother. But her fabulously awful parents force her to abort. Aviva runs away from home on a picaresque trip where she is at the mercy of truck drivers and Jesus freaks.

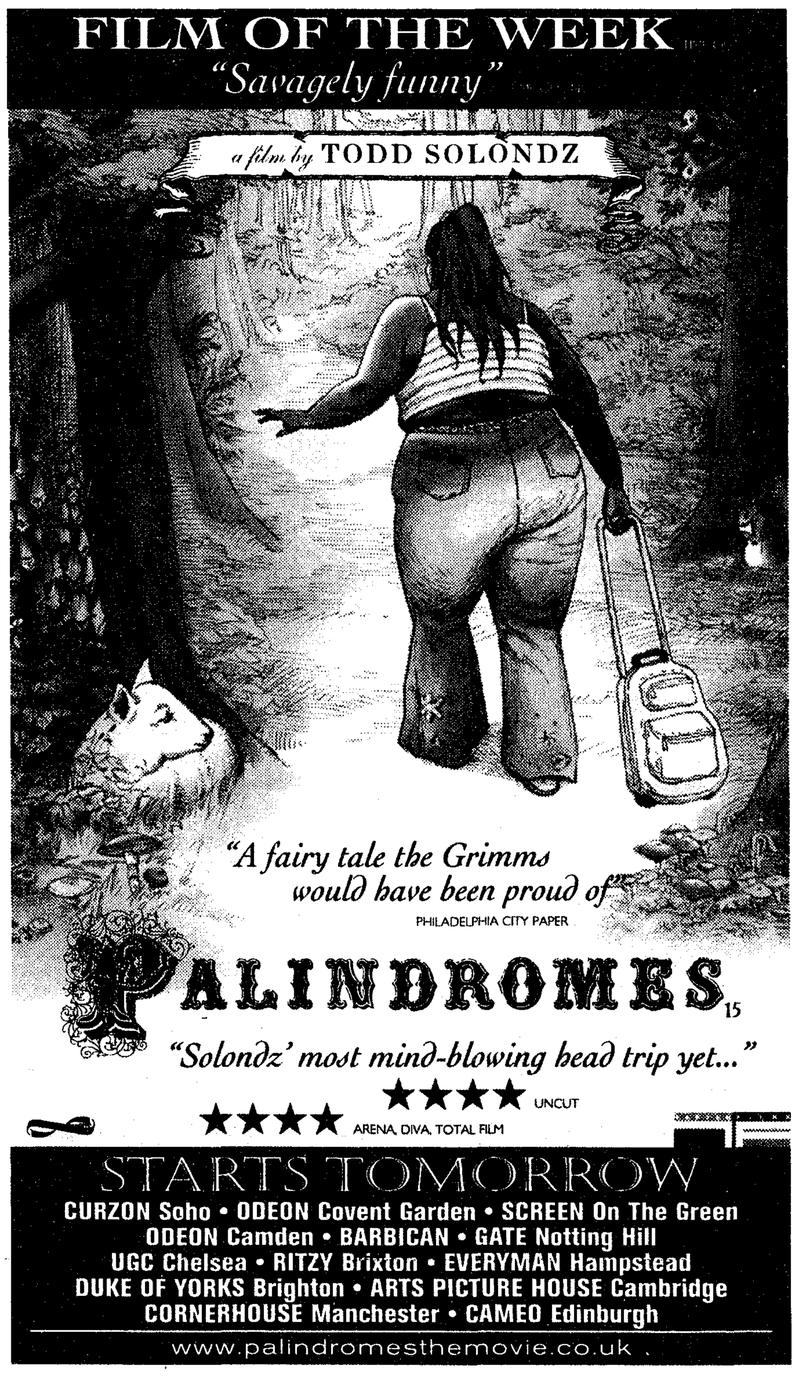
What is unsettling is not the underage motel sex, nor even the crazed Christian shelter run by Debra Monk's Mama Sunshine. It's the fact that Aviva is confusingly played by two women, four adolescent girls, one 12-year-old boy, and a six-year-old girl. The result is that it looks like a freak show rather than a film.

Twin Sisters is a creaky melodrama about sisters who are torn apart at the age of six by selfish relatives after their parents die. Lotte is brought up in the Netherlands by well-heeled snobs. Anna is forced to slave for peasant relatives in Germany. In 1936, Lotte is playing piano while Anna is pitching manure. The war drives them apart. One marries a Jewish pianist, the other an SS officer. There are bundles of Lotte's unsent letters, and unspeakable cruelties in Anna's locker. Tiny misunderstandings poison hopes of reconciliation.

Ben Sombogaart's film is stern and well acted. I suspect it looks better on the page.

Don Boyd's bizarre documentary, **Andrew & Jeremy Get Married**, is a long portrait of two middle-aged gay men who muse about their relationship and what keeps them together. They are deeply in love and dependent on each other without having a clue why. I guess that's the chemistry.

Darwin's Nightmare is a sober documentary about the ecological devastation caused by the Nile perch in Lake Victoria. Tanzania is starving, but no one can afford to buy this huge and voracious fish, introduced to the lake some 50 years ago. Russian cargo planes fly out 50 tonnes of it a time. The suspicion is that they fly in arms and ammunition. The director, Hubert Saupert grills the pilots, the factory managers, the fishers, the urchins and the prostitutes. It is a harrowing narrative.



The Times, Thursday, May 5, 2005, Issue 68379, p.108-109.

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