

**Carp Into Dragon**  
A film by Lucy Lee

A brief but arresting collection of animations, Lucy Lee's *Films '93-'04*

grants viewers the rare pleasure of witnessing an artist's development from the very beginning. More than that however, it represents a powerful argument on behalf of the short film itself, a form which audiences can often find inaccessible.

The earliest films here are intricate love-affairs with puppetry, peopled by beautifully grotesque "egg-head" characters. (Their heads are, literally, eggs.) An abstract, epileptic meditation on thwarted communication, *Hidden Hearts of Fish*, rounds out this early period with a flourish and succeeds by being hypnotic, rather than exasperating.

In her second phase, roughly 1997 to the present, the animator's touch develops new

deftness and unobtrusiveness. The art here is married perfectly to narratives where inspiration and transmutation are the themes. The end-products are cartoonish, but never childish, with *Waiting* and *Bird Becomes Bird* as particular highlights. Lee has rightly won awards for both.

The final film here, *The Gates of Heaven*, represents the apotheosis of Lee's development thus far. Hauntingly narrated by Margaret Robertson, this hand-painted story of carp seeking immortality in dragon form is adapted from a Chinese folk-tale and rewards repeat viewings the way only a masterpiece can. It is stunning.

Val Nolan



**Muse**  
Absolution Tour  
Warner Music UK  
www.muse.mu

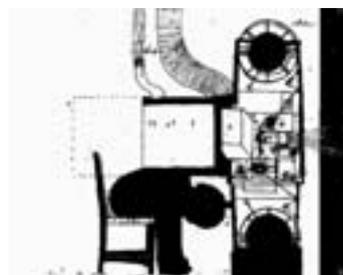
The best thing about a tour DVD is that you get to see the band performing live but you get the little extras too. Muse has cemented their position as

one of the leading UK's live acts from Reading in 2002 to Glastonbury's main stage in 2004. The *Absolution* DVD highlights some of the best moments from the band's mammoth 18 month tour, which include highlights from London's Earls Court along with some great moments from the band's USA tour.

Upon releasing *Absolution*, the band's third studio album, Muse entered a different arena playing to over 1.4 million people throughout the tour. The DVD includes tracks from *Absolution* and other previous favourites such as *Showbiz*. Their fourth album is expected in Spring 2006.

**Thomas Hicks**  
Animation 2005

Thomas Hicks is an animator who graduated from Kingston University. His latest work in 2005 has brought him to the attention of Warp Records, when he won a commission to animate two music videos for the band Gravenhurst. The two videos are *The Velvet Cell* and *I Turn My Face To The Forest Floor*. Both these animations are created in the same monotone that combines traditional drawn animation techniques with simple film elements, and in parts are reminiscent of Pink Floyd's *The Wall*. The subject matter plays with the idea of subversive messaging and



provides a visual critique of urban violence and depression. These films are utterly absorbing and bring a whole new dimension to the music and lyrics of Gravenhurst.

See issue 13 for an interview with Gravenhurst.

**Recollected Pleasures of Cultural Encounters**

A film by Biggi Stiller  
21 min  
German with English Subtitles

Writer, director, editor and narrator Biggi Stiller (presumably no relation) has adapted the diary she kept while travelling through India. The narration is balanced with a series of shots of the Asian community in London, where the artist is now based.

With a commendable ambition despite a very limited budget, the film aims to discuss and parallel outsiders in foreign lands, multi-culturalism, alienation and individual identity. Stiller describes her varied meetings and experiences in India while falling for a fellow traveller, who represents India as a whole. By the end of her trip her enjoyment has been dampened by a lack of fruition in that relationship.

While the narrated story concludes with a possible

romance never being realised, the visuals are only occasionally married with the words. Stiller has attempted to tell two stories at once, one shown, one spoken, and while the juxtaposition identifies the themes she wishes to cover there is no consistency to the editing.

Stiller talks of lunch and shows a curry being devoured, having a fan in her hotel room and then offers a shot of a fan, but this only makes such images redundant. On other occasions the visuals have no relation to the story at all, especially as the narration leads to its conclusion and the two travellers share a final kiss.

Without an obvious metaphor to be deciphered, I wondered if some of the visuals were necessary to the narrative? The pictures do not aid in telling the story, and I felt at times undermined Stiller's chosen medium for her tale.

*Recollected Pleasures of Cultural Encounters* screens on digital channel Propeller TV.

Luke Watson

**How can my film be reviewed or featured?**

We are always on the look-out for new shorts or longer films to review, especially by new filmmakers. We accept all genres of film and have plenty of eager reviewers waiting to watch your work. To submit your film for possible review, please send your DVDs to Aesthetica, PO Box 371, York, YO23 1WL, UK. We look forward to hearing from you.