

## SOCIAL INTERCOURSE

### Rambo

Directed by Sylvester Stallone  
Starring Sylvester Stallone, Julie Benz, and Paul Schultz  
Opens Friday

Remembered fondly for his memorable roles as Sgt Joe Bomowski in the maternal gunfire romp *Stop Or My Mom Will Shoot!* and Lincoln Hawk in the quintessential arm-wrestling epic *Over the Top*, Sylvester Stallone has a special place in the hearts of Americans for his willingness to star in more absurd bullshit than the average Academy-Award-nominated actor. But that will all change with this reprisal of his breakout character John Rambo in this third sequel to *First Blood*.

Unfortunately, Rambo has matured somewhat since he first singlehandedly took on the Vietcong 25 years ago. Back on active duty on the Thai-Burmese border, the middle-aged action hero now wages a one-man war against the goddamn cats that keep digging around in his flower garden, and won't rest until the paper boy who forgot to leave his Sunday morning edition has met cold justice. Haunted by flashbacks of being tortured and interrogated at a particularly awkward dinner party, this battle-hardened veteran will ensure that any Charlies that live under his roof will abide by his rules, by any means necessary, including the use of rocket launchers and restricting access to the car on Friday nights.



### My Shaky Jane

With Eamon McGrath and the Wild Dogs and Lovertine  
Saturday, 26 January at 8pm  
*The Velvet Underground*

Known for their energetic live shows and ardour for women with light-induced epilepsy, Toronto's *My Shaky Jane* hits the Velvet Underground this week with their catchy combination of '60s pop and '70s rock. The group released their debut album *Oh! The Pretty Things* this past year, and the band has started to get attention from Canadian college radio stations.

The disc's artwork features an attractive, nude blond woman with strategically placed hands and a come-hither look resting in the immediate path of a trolley, making the band somewhat like a modern-day Snidely Whiplash, complete with mustache-twirling and evil snickering. Just don't show her a strobe light.

### Break Forth Canada 2008

Featuring Third Day and Mercy Me  
Runs 25-27 January  
Shaw Conference Centre

Spreading the good news about Jesus to an estimated 15 000 attendees, this three-day Christian conference features over 160 classes and more than 20 different workshops. The convention also features several prominent Christian rock bands, such as Mercy Me and Third Day. The latter group has won multiple Grammy awards, as well as several "Dove Awards," which are the Christian-rock equivalent of a Grammy. Besides releasing a chronology of their past five years of music, Third Day also released a Christmas album this past year, marking the first time a Christmas album has been made by a actual Christian group, rather than 'N Sync or the Barenaked Ladies.

JOHN KMECH  
Also featured on the rest of this page



## A monster mash of brilliant marketing

The actors in JJ Abrams's mysterious *Cloverfield* sound off about the movie, its publicity, and 9/11

JOHN KMECH  
Arts & Entertainment Staff

In the normal course of action during any monster movie, the beast always takes center stage, destroying buildings, blowing things up, and generally running amok while the mosquito-like aircraft buzz around and annoy it to no end and the ant-like humans flee in fear. In most creature features, these humans are forgettable, their sole purpose being to run, scream, and get eaten or tossed around.

But JJ Abrams, producer of *Lost*, set out from the beginning to make *Cloverfield* a different kind of monster movie, and as a result, the young, relatively unknown actors in the lead roles said they wanted the audience to identify with their characters on a personal level.

"I think that you can have this really emotional experience watching the characters deal with this really catastrophic situation," remarks Michael Stahl-David, who plays Rob, the main character in the film and whose going-away party is crashed by the emergence of the beast. "While, at the same time, [you can be] entertained by the fact that it's a monster, and there's this guy behind the camera making wisecracks."

"You feel like you're going through this ride as this group of characters," adds Odette Yustman, who portrays Beth, Rob's love interest in the film. "You feel like they're showing you real emotions. I was really glad that we were able

to portray that."

Those organic emotions drawn up among the characters by the destruction of New York have prompted comparisons to the feelings of the people on the streets during 9/11. For Stahl-David, who works in New York, the emotions were palpable enough to affect him as shooting took place.

**"I think it speaks more to today's generation. The Internet plays such a huge part in our lives. It only makes sense to market [Cloverfield] that way."**

JESSICA LUCAS  
LILY IN CLOVERFIELD

"I remember when I was doing the phone call scene where my mom calls me, and I have to tell her that Jason died," Stahl-David notes solemnly. "And I thought, 'Wow, a lot of people actually had to have this phone call on that day.'"

However, while Yustman realized the film's potential gravity, she says that it wasn't the filmmakers' or actors' purpose to dredge up memories about the terrorist attacks.

"We understand that there are similarities, but those were not our intentions at all. This is a complete fantasy movie, and it's about a huge monster that attacks New York City."

With the mystery of that creature at the center of the film's masterfully discreet marketing strategy, the film took advantage of the public's thirst for information on the *Cloverfield* monster. The actors all felt that the extensive online advertising and word-of-mouth buzz would result in the movie acting as a pioneer in a new age of cinematic publicity.

"I think it speaks more to today's generation. The Internet plays such a huge part in our lives. It only makes sense to market it that way," explains Jessica Lucas, who plays Lily in the film.

"It's cool and interesting how much the fans become part of the advertising. I mean, the message board becomes such a huge part of promoting the movie. And these are just the people who are excited for it," Stahl-David adds.

That connection with the fans from the beginning allows for a much more immersive experience, one where the viewer can relate to the characters and feel distress for their plight rather than just see them as expendable. In Stahl-David's view, this particular monster movie centers on a very basic human moral.

"I guess the message, if anything, is that when something terrible happens, what's most important to you becomes clear, and the rest of the petty stuff drops away."

## Cloverfield offers a dizzying but genuine thrill ride

### filmreview

#### Cloverfield

Now Playing  
Directed by Matt Reeves  
Starring Michael Stahl-David, Jessica Lucas, and Odette Yustman

JOHN KMECH  
Arts & Entertainment Staff

While gigantic monsters kicking New York's ass never really gets old for the cinema-going crowd, there's been a lack of originality in the genre within recent years, and the resulting flicks have been a mixed bag at best. Peter Jackson remade *King Kong* to critical acclaim and Academy appreciation, while Roland Emmerich's rendition of *Godzilla* is best remembered for its ferocious awfulness.

Enter JJ Abrams, producer of hit TV show *Lost*, with his pet project, *Cloverfield*, a movie well known for its clandestine advertising campaign and not much else. Having set out to make the quintessential American monster, Abrams' production succeeds in both living up to the hype of its marketing and crafting a unique, though flawed, experience that

manages to be about more than just the beast itself.

Shot entirely in documentary, hand-held camera style, the film begins with a surprise going away party in New York for Rob (Michael Stahl-David), who's taking a job in Japan. The ongoing gossip and drama among the party's youth is interrupted by an earthquake and a huge explosion in downtown New York. After seeing the head of the Statue of Liberty get tossed against a building and settle down next to them, it's non-stop running as the group tries to escape the monster and save their friends.

From the start of the action to the finale, *Cloverfield* feels more like a motion simulator than a movie. You briefly get glimpses of the monster then are suddenly moving down another tunnel, fleeing to an imagined safety. For anyone that gets motion sickness, it may be a good idea to bring an airplane bag and a handful of Dramamine to this movie.

However, *Cloverfield* really couldn't have been filmed any other way and still be as effective, as the perspective is crucial in making the story seem immediately relevant. You only see what the characters see, and in our current cultural zeitgeist, where everything is watched by everyone on YouTube, seeing a first-hand account

makes it feel that much more real and terrifying to us. A film like this wouldn't have been nearly as effective ten years ago.

The movie evokes obvious allusions to 9/11, with a giant cloud of dust rushing towards the frightened onlookers as a building collapses and office papers floating through the sky amid the dust. Oddly, this movie did a better job of humanizing the feelings of people on that day than Oliver Stone's *World Trade Center*, simply due to the way it was shot.

The film isn't without flaws, though: besides the headache-inducing camerawork, if New York was being destroyed, there would apparently still be plenty of Nokia phones, Pepsi, and Mountain Dew to go around. Despite being in ad-filled New York, the obvious product placement is enough to ruin the immersion and remind you that you're watching a Hollywood blockbuster rather than independently shot footage. Many people, aching for explanation, will probably also dislike the ending, which won't be divulged here.

Despite such drawbacks, *Cloverfield* predominantly works in providing an intense thrill ride that few action movies these days achieve. But, like the movie, it's all based on perspective; the guy next to me fell asleep in the first ten minutes.