

Life

Take 5
Billie Eilish

WATCH
If you're crazy for The Beatles then don't miss *The Beatles: Get Back*, a three-part documentary series about the making of their album *Let It Be*. With restored footage and audio, it is a must-watch for superfans.

LISTEN
Still unsure of what bitcoin is? Or wanting to understand how cryptocurrency works? Each Monday on *Crypto Curious*, hosts Tracey, Blake and Craig break down the basics and talk about new trends in this fast-paced field.

READ
Emmy, Grammy and Tony Award winner Billy Porter's new book *Unprotected: A Memoir* is out today and provides a powerful insight to growing up black and gay in the US, and how he learnt to heal after trauma and abuse.



TRY
For treats to gift family, friends or staff, Sweet Chick's festive season range could fit the bill with biscuit boxes, christmas cakes, and a festive chocolate log as well as DIY pavlova wreath kits available. thesweetchick.com.au

GO
Sydney Dance Company is back with New Breed, a celebration of Australian choreography in partnership with Carriageworks as four choreographers show off their fresh ideas. From \$35. sydneydancecompany.com

Layers of veils, layers of tales

The drama fuelling the Gucci film isn't over, writes **Lisa Armstrong**.

Towards the end of the 1980s, during my first stint at *British Vogue*, I was dispatched to inspect the new Gucci collection. It was an early lesson in how the mighty have fallen. I knew that the brand – established as a luggage house in Florence, in 1921, by Guccio Gucci, a one-time bell-hop – had once been the last word in glamour.

By the mid-1980s, the glory days were definitely over. Visiting Gucci's London showroom meant entering a tired room near Bond St and trying to find 20 ways to say "ooh, what an amazing keyring" to a weary-looking PR.

This would have been around the time that Paolo Gucci, head designer and Guccio's grandson, and his father, Aldo, were jetsetting around the world, living it up on the Gucci dollar which, it turned out, was in no small part generated by fake versions of the originals.

There's a fascinating detour in *House of Gucci*, the Ridley Scott film about the Gucci family murder that created shock waves in the mid-1990s, in which Aldo, as chairman of Gucci (played by Al Pacino), seems to be confessing that the fakes are not only sanctioned by the house, but that, in some nefarious way, the business profited from them. Gucci had become a byword for shoddy pavement stalls and fastness.

One of the joys of covering fashion is that histories can change dramatically. In 1989, Dawn Mello, the elegant and sophisticated former fashion director and president of Bergdorf Goodman, the exclusive Manhattan department store, was hired as



Adam Driver and Lady Gaga star in recently released *House of Gucci*.

designer and vice-president of the clapped-out fashion house.

First task: reduce the number of stores from more than 1000 worldwide to 180. Second task: eliminate 15,000 of the dodgiest products. Third: disinter the elegant Bamboo bag (worn by Grace Kelly) and horsebit loafer (worn by everyone fabulous in the 1950s and early 60s) and start making them again.

Mello set Gucci on the path to recovery, yet she's been streamlined out of the film. I know scripts require simplification, but why did she have to lose out? Following the product purge, her next act of genius, in 1990, was to hire a young Texan-born designer to come up with a collection they could put on the catwalk.

No one outside the industry knew who 29-year-old Tom Ford was. Not many people inside it did,

either. But marquee "name" designers wouldn't touch the basket-case firm.

His first catwalk show for the label – prom-shaped skirts decorated with flower pots – in 1995 was a misfire, even though it was charming. Ford sensed something was wrong.

But by that autumn, Ford had assembled his A-team – French super-stylist Carine Roitfeld and the Peruvian photographer Mario Testino, who would, many years later, become engulfed in a #MeToo scandal.

In the autumn of 1995, one of those once-in-a-decade moments was about to occur, when everything in fashion changes and stars are born. In a 180-degree deviation from the "flower pot" collection, Ford sent Kate Moss, Amber Valletta and Shalom Harlow down the catwalk in jewel-

coloured velvet trouser suits, worn with satin shirts unbuttoned to the navel, smoky eye make-up and a whole lotta attitude.

For the next few years, Gucci was the world's number one luxury fashion brand. Ford became a superstar: clever, witty, ridiculously handsome.

Just as well, because the dizzying ascent of Ford's Gucci distracted us from the festering underbelly that was the family. In 1995, Maurizio Gucci, the one who'd helped oust Aldo, was shot dead at the age of 46 by a hitman hired by Patrizia Gucci, Maurizio's former wife. She had met and wooed Maurizio in 1970. But by 1995, she had been discarded. Driven crazy by his coldness, she flipped. With the help of a clairvoyant, she orchestrated the murder of her ex, for which she spent 18 years in prison.

One of the many extraordinary aspects of this Italian soap opera is how little it impinged on the fashion press back then. There was no social media bringing us minute-by-minute accounts of Patrizia's latest court bombshells.

It's only now, with the release of the film, that many people are discovering the full story. Not that it's a good film; in my opinion, it's a gold-plated turkey.

Lady Gaga's charisma is by far the best thing in it and at least her Mauritanian accent is consistent throughout. Together with the captions at the end, which helpfully point out that Gucci is now valued at around \$60 billion, you're left with the impression that the relationship between subject and filmmaker was a bit too cosy.

The Gucci family is, by all accounts, none too happy either, albeit not for artistic reasons. They're allegedly "considering their next steps". Ominous words in Gucci-land.

The Telegraph, London

SUPERQUIZ

BEGINNER (1 point each)

1. Peter Costello once said about babies: "have one for mum, one for dad and (what)?"
2. What are the names of the chambers of the heart?
3. Charles Schulz is known for which comic strip featuring Charlie Brown and Snoopy?
4. Was the first person to represent the Northern Territory in the House of Representatives named H.G. Nelson or Roy Slaven?
5. According to the saying, there is always free cheese where?

INTERMEDIATE (2 points each)

6. Did a majority of Western Australians vote for or against a 1933 referendum to withdraw from the Federal Commonwealth?
7. As the crow flies, Mildura in Victoria is closest to which capital city?
8. Which of these is a pinniped: lion, dandelion or sea lion?
9. The title of which James Taylor song was later the first line of a Beatles song sung by George?
10. Amy Chua's 2011 parenting memoir is *Battle Hymn of the (who)?*

ADVANCED (3 points each)

11. Edith Cresson was the first female prime minister of which country?
12. Angiogenesis is the formation in the body of new what?
13. Which two countries formed the Anti-Comintern Pact against the Soviet Union in 1936?
14. Name Australia's first prime minister and the party they led.
15. Olesky Sands, one of Europe's latest deserts, is in which country?

by Chris Berry
1. One for the country 2. Atrium (left) and ventricle (right) and right 3. Penguin 4. H.G. Nelson 5. In a mousetrap 6. For 7. Adelaide 8. Sea lions 9. Something in the Way She Moves 10. Tiger Mother 11. France 12. Blood vessels 13. Japan and Germany 14. Edmund Barton, Protectionist Party 15. Ukraine, Communist

ANSWERS

Home made

For this lentil salad, I like to use French baby lentils because they keep their shape well. **FRANK CAMORRA**

LENTIL SALAD WITH BEETROOT, APPLE AND GRILLED SALMON

INGREDIENTS

- 4 medium beetroot
- 1 tsp thyme, chopped
- 230ml olive oil plus a little for frying and drizzling
- ½ brown onion, finely diced
- 1 carrot, diced small
- 1 celery stick, diced small
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 2 bay leaves
- 300g French green lentils
- 30ml sherry vinegar
- 8 x 120g salmon fillet pieces, skin on
- 10 mint leaves, chopped
- 1 cup flat-leaf parsley, chopped
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- 40ml lemon juice
- 2 Granny Smith apples
- 1 lemon, cut in half

METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 180C. Wrap each beetroot in foil and roast for an hour until soft in the centre. When cool enough to handle, cut into 1-centimetre dice and mix with thyme and 100 millilitres olive oil.
2. Sweat onion, carrot, celery, garlic and bay leaves in a little olive oil until soft.
3. Add lentils, cover with cold water then bring to a simmer and cook until soft, but not mushy. Drain lentils and place in a bowl, add sherry vinegar and 30 millilitres olive oil and toss well.
4. Heat grill pan and start cooking the salmon skin side down to crisp it. After about 10 minutes, turn salmon and cook for about 5 minutes then leave in a warm place until needed.
5. Mix lentils, beetroot, mint and parsley. Mix mustard, lemon juice and remaining 100 millilitres olive oil for the dressing. Cut apples into matchsticks.
6. Add dressing to lentil salad, divide between eight plates, top with some apple sticks and finish with a piece of salmon. Drizzle with extra virgin olive oil and a squeeze of lemon.



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Arts

CONTACT Nick Galvin, Arts Editor
ngalvin@smh.com.au

Ambitious, original ... and a bit bonkers

FILM

TITANE

★★★★★

Rated R, 108 minutes.
Selected cinemas.

Reviewed by **PAUL BYRNES**

A filmmaker who sets out to shock ought not be shocked when we are shocked. In *Titane*, and her debut feature *Raw* (2016), French writer/director Julia Ducornau has been pushing boundaries and buttons to do with damaging the human body.

Raw was about a vegetarian who became a carnivorous killer when forced to eat a rabbit's liver at vet school. At its debut in a midnight slot at Toronto, two people fainted, giving the film an instant buzz.

Ducornau has said that the frenzy on social media infuriated her, partly because it was fanned by people who had never seen the film, but what did she expect? She is a provocateur. Her films provoke outrage, trying to shake us out of a torpor induced, allegedly, by modern life and imagery.

She has acknowledged a debt to David Cronenberg but *Titane* reminded me also of the German bad boy Michael Haneke, whose film *Benny's Video* provoked similar feelings of revulsion almost 30 years ago. They're in a rare enclave – European art film-makers who use screen violence to critique screen violence.

It's easy to get confused about intentions when you are wincing and hiding your eyes.

In July, Ducornau became only the second woman to win the top prize at Cannes – the Palme d'Or – so it is safe to assume the jury led by Spike Lee saw more than shock value, but what? It's as hard to classify the film as to discern a coherent argument.



Foot to the floor: Scenes from Julia Ducornau's shockingly weird but cinematically inventive *Titane*, which walks a fine line between its wild ambition and its sometimes silly effects.



In interviews, she's explained her intentions, but I'm not sure those intentions are legible on screen. That's not such a serious criticism: if a film swirling with ideas takes huge risks, that's always exciting. As Kubrick might have said, logic is over-rated.

That said, Ducornau's risks here



go beyond the brave; foolhardy might be a better word. A young girl has a titanium plate inserted in her head after a car accident, in which her father was driving. Fifteen years later, she works at a motorshow that seems more like a strip club, somewhere in the south of France.

Alexia (Agathe Rousselle) writhes around on top of a muscle car, then kills a cheeky punter in the car park with the chopstick she uses to hold up her hair. While washing off the blood, the muscle car gets all rowdy – and this time, she accepts the car's advances, in a scene directed mostly for comedy

(sort of like Herbie Does Dallas, if you get my drift).

Alexia goes on the run, cutting her hair and breaking her own nose to change her appearance. She meets a fireman (Vincent Lindon) whose son has been missing for more than 10 years. He's only too happy to believe that this pale, tattooed "boy" is his long lost son. Alexia becomes Adrian.

At its core, *Titane* is a love story, in which two monstrous people find each other. That is Ducornau's point – to make the extremes of character so extreme that we are forced to examine where we place our own limits on empathy and understanding. Alexia kills half a dozen people in the first reel. Ducornau wonders if she can bring us to care for her, after we've seen her do these monstrous things? And can Alexia find something in her heart other than violence?

To some extent, it might depend whether you think that earlier scene, where she dallies with the Detroit iron, is worthy of serious interpretation. Ducornau takes the story a long way from Kansas, courting ridicule. Horror fans love that kind of thing, but I'm not sure this film sits comfortably within that genre, either. It's messy and showy about its intellectual pretensions. Horror that takes itself too seriously usually gets a drubbing. *Titane* walks a fine line between its wild ambition and its sometimes silly effects.

Cronenberg is a master at making us suspend disbelief, for the sake of where the story takes us. Ducornau has real gifts as a storyteller but she has less clarity of purpose, at least so far. It's a fabulously weird and original tale. Two fine lead performances carry us through the sometimes misty forests of meaning, to a finale that seriously defies description. OMG!

Daring pays off as satire shines a light on hypocrisy

FILM

BAD LUCK BANGING OR LOONY PORN

★★★★★

Rated R, 106 minutes. Selected cinemas.

Reviewed by **PAUL BYRNES**

Don't say you weren't warned – the movie begins with a sex tape and the clue is in the title – although if pornography had as many fertile ideas as this Romanian slice of satire, it might be less boring.

To put it another way, in a world where police murder, terrorist violence, famine and all forms of human depravity are commonly available as spectator events, it seems odd to object to the fact some people like to film their home-made sexual adventures. Although I doubt Radu Jude wants to tell anyone how to think. His argument here is more that not thinking is not working so well for us all.

Jude is a 44-year-old Romanian director with a long list of credits – shorts, documentaries and

features. He has won a slew of prizes, including the Golden Bear in the most recent Berlin Film Festival for this one. He is steeped in the history of cinema: you would have to be, to break this many rules. *Bad Luck Banging...* is about the most unconventional film to wash up on these shores since Godard was a film critic – and Jude is less of an egotist.

The sex tape is short but riotous, as a couple in their 40s go at it with dirty talk and physical gusto. We then follow Emilia, a teacher at an exclusive school (Katia Pascariu) as she walks the streets of Bucharest, during the pandemic. Everyone is wearing a mask and everyone is cranky. Emilia remonstrates with a man who has parked his car on the pavement.

He responds with a stream of sexualised invective. Another man yells at a driver who nearly knocked him down, daring the driver to do it again – so he does. Shards of real footage show what real people sometimes do to each other – like the bus driver who refused to carry a Roma woman on his bus, then fogged her with a



Everyone is masked, everyone is cranky in Radu Jude's creation.

stick when she remonstrated. The camera follows Emilia for long periods, but it keeps rolling as she leaves the frame, so we focus on the backgrounds. The buildings are dilapidated, the streets chaotic, shops shuttered. Jude punctuates the action with his own comments and quotes from famous artists, so the film becomes an essay.

He structures it into chapters, each wildly different in style. A middle section uses subtitles rather than voice-over to document some of the madness of Romanian history, before and

since the fall of the dictator Ceaucescu.

Slowly, we begin to understand Emilia's problem. Someone has uploaded the sex tape and now everyone at her school is aware of it. She must face a tribunal of angry parents. This constitutes the third act, a star-chamber, in which it's clear Romania's past is far from past. All the social distortion of the war, the communist years and the dictatorship play out in the leers and jeers of a group of socially advantaged caricatures. Emilia, a beacon of learning, sensibility and

thoughtfulness, must defend her right to a private life against the vandals.

This is pungent satire, ripped straight from recent pandemic hysteria, and it resonates far beyond Romania's borders. Hypocrisy is hardly an isolated condition, even if the kind of hypocrisy Jude holds up to ridicule here is very specific.

The free-flowing form of the movie will irritate and intimidate some. That's the point, and part of the reason for the explicit sex. This polemical form is not new in cinema but it's so rare nowadays that it might seem like it is. And to be fair, most of Jude's predecessors in this area, from Eisenstein and Bunuel to outragers such as Jodorowsky and Ken Russell, have retained a stronger semblance of narrative.

There is a story here, but you have to pan for it. And like gold dust, it can be stimulating to find the way the ideas link up and cross-fertilise. There is zero chance of someone in our film industry being able to fund something like this. Our loss, I reckon.

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