

# Tom's Tomfoolery of Cinema

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*Sin City* \*\*\*\*\*

Dimension Films and Troublemaker Pictures presents a film written and directed by Paul Rodriguez and Frank Miller. With special guest director Quentin Tarantino. Starring Rosario Dawson, Bruce Willis, Clive Owen, Mickey Rourke, Benicio Del Toro, Rutger Hauer, Josh Hartnett, Jessica Alba, Elijah Wood, Michael Madsen, Nick Stahl, Brittany Murphy, and Michael Clarke Duncan. Running time: 124 minutes. Rated R (for sustained, strong, stylized violence, nudity and sexual content including dialogue).

Frank Miller's vision of *Sin City* is one so complex and detailed, suspension of disbelief does not play a factor during the film because every character, setting, and emotion is lived, breathed, and felt. This film goes beyond the standard entertainment. It is divided into individual stories that not only introduce the characters, but the city itself. The city is not bad per se, its population just

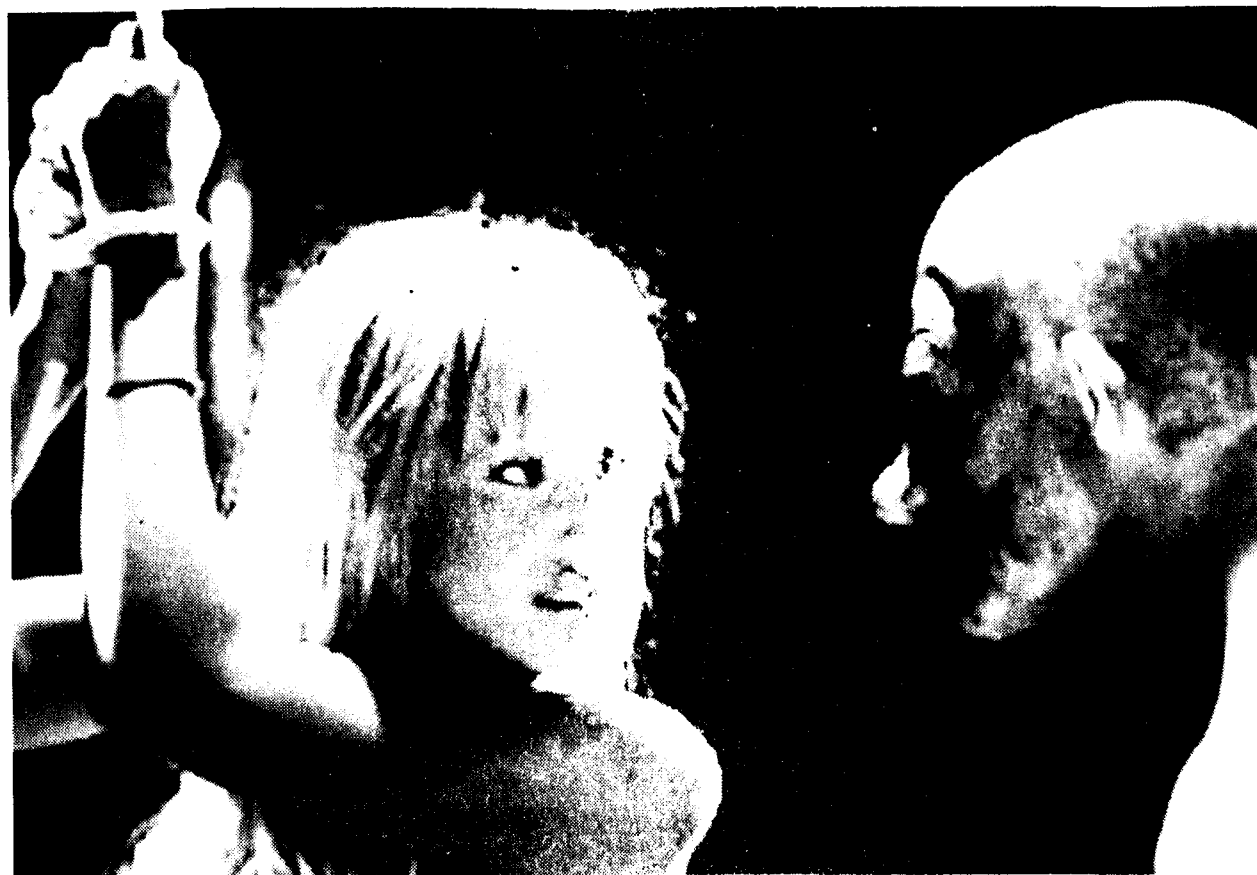
lives their lives the way they believe they should be. Though the graphic novels on which the film is based delves deeper into the psyche of the characters, this is the first time a graphic novel has been turned into a good film.

The film is presented in the same stylistic manner as the novels, shot in black and white, with specific characters or objects colorized to enhance the visual sensation. It is, one could say, film noir style, because the main character of each story provides the corresponding narration that reveals how the character is feeling or acting in the scenarios. However, it goes further than just film noir. Robert Rodriguez creates a reality to the story so perfect that for two hours and four minutes there is nothing to experience except *Sin City*.

This reviewer is not going to give plot synopses or spoilers to detract a potential viewer from seeing this film. However, I will say that this film is unlike anything anyone has ever seen. Rodriguez used digital cameras and total green screen for his sets, except for the vehicles, which were real. It is the same cinematography used for the new *Star Wars* trilogy

and the dreadful *Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow*. The difference between *Sin City* and the other films is that *Sin City's* visuals are not added to take away from the story, to only provide eye candy during a completely banal film. Rodriguez adds the sets, the backgrounds and the appropriate colorization to TELL the story. This film also was shot mostly in the basement studio at Rodriguez' ranch in California. That's right, you heard me. No production studio or location shoot, it was done in a basement.

A couple more points about Rodriguez, beginning with the fact that he is a multi-level director. Not only does he have final say on how it is shot and with what dialogue, he composed the score, edited the film, and designed the production. Not many directors these days take the time to edit their own work. Another point is that Rodriguez was forced to resign from the Director's Guild of America, because he did not want to do this film without letting Frank Miller share the director spotlight. He also used digital cameras, shooting his film on MiniDV, instead of shooting on



Jessica Alba, who plays Nancy, and Nick Stahl, who plays Yellow Bastard, star in *Sin City*. This scene was shot in front of a green screen and the background was later edited.

35mm film. So Rodriguez now joins fellow "outcasts" as Quentin Tarantino and George Lucas. Okay my fellow readers: I

wanted to end my reign as film master with a great film. I think I have fulfilled my obligation. Robert Rodriguez and Frank

Miller could not have created a more perfect world, a world of violence, sex, and of course, sin.

## American Hi-Fi gets ready for new album, tour

By John Fox  
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American Hi-Fi (AHF) is back and ready for a brand new start with a new album on a new label.

Released on Maverick Records, Hearts on Parade showcases a band that is finally comfortable in their own skin. Lead singer, guitarist, and songwriter, Stacy Jones, spoke with The Capital Times before going out on tour in

support of Hearts on Parade.

Jones is very excited about the release of the new album and going back on tour. He has high hopes for this album because of significant personal meaning behind it.

"You always hope that your record will do as well as possible," said Jones. "I think this record, in particular, means a lot because we made it after Island Records had let us go. So we made it on our own. It was really a defining statement for us as a band."

Jones said that the band was not going to let a little thing like not having a record label get in the way of making music. Maverick is getting behind the new album with their promotions and is happy to be doing what they love.

"We felt like we were really hitting our stride when Island decided to let us go," said Jones. "So, I think we're really excited for this record to come out because we made this record for ourselves. Ultimately, we just hope it does well enough that we get to make another one. That's the real goal."

AHF was signed to Maverick by label president, Freddy DeMann, and so far the band's experience with the label has been great. Recalling the day the band was signed, Jones said, "It's always good when the president of the label is the one that signs you,"

said Jones. [DeMann] heard the record, called me, and I was in his office an hour later. Another hour after that we shook hands and had a record deal. It was cool. He was really old school about it. I really appreciate that."

According to Jones, the new album has more of a pop element in it than the previous releases. Having two solid albums behind him, Jones went into this one with the confidence of a seasoned songwriter. The songs on the debut album were the first he had ever written entirely on his own, while the material on the second album was written exclusively on the road.

"I wrote it in hotel rooms, tour buses, and backstage at clubs," said Jones of the material on the second album, *The Art of Losing*. "It was a little more aggressive, a little more pissed off. This record was written after I moved out to LA and got situated in my new crib."

Jones said the new album is definitely a new direction for the band, but it still sounds like AHF.

"I think you can put on any of our records and know that it's us," said Jones.

Hearts on Parade is eclectic in its sound with hints of influences from many genres throughout the album.

"Something Real" (on the new album) is very Oasis-like to me."

said Jones. "I don't want to say that all of our music is pop, but I do find all of these influences in the record. It's definitely a pop record, we will continue to do it. I think we are really serious about ourselves and figuring out the way we are as a band. You can't expect to stick to one formula. Our first record was a hard rock record and we had to grow beyond that. It's not like we're going to stay in a narrow and dated space. We want to feel good and write music that people can relate to."

AHF's first major release came through the success of their first single, "Flavor of the Weak." In fact, most reports say that from this song only Jones talked about the opportunity to release the new album. "Flavor of the Weak" gave the band a push in the pitifully high pop charts for just one song.

"It was really cool," said Jones. "It enabled us to do a lot of things. We got on a lot of cool tours. We built up a fan base all over the world. We can go to England, all over Europe, and Japan and our tours will sell out before we even get there, which is really cool. 'Flavor of the Weak' was a big part of that. We got to go on Leno and Letterman and all of that. That opened the door for when our second record came out and we did all the same things. It's a cool thing. People love the band, it's really a lot of people

that don't know American Hi-Fi. That's kind of our job now, to let people know we are more than that one song. We play 'Flavor of the Weak' second in our set when we play live. We do that on purpose because we want people to know that there's more to us than just that song."

Although AHF is a relatively young band, Jones is no stranger to the music business. He began his music career in the 90's, when he played in the hugely popular alternative bands Letters to Cleo and Veruca Salt. Being somewhat of a music scene vet, Jones dispensed a few words of wisdom he picked up along the way.

"I think the greatest lesson is not to let the industry influence what you do," said Jones. "The minute that you try to appease an industry trend, you really do yourself a disservice. Just make the music you want to make and let the industry figure you out. Don't try to curtail to them."

The new album, released last Tuesday, April 12, is in stores now. AHF is touring the east coast now with Bowling For Soup and has already hit the late night talk show circuit in support of Hearts on Parade. You can check AHF out on the web at [www.americanhi-fi.com](http://www.americanhi-fi.com).



Photo courtesy of [www.americanhi-fi.com](http://www.americanhi-fi.com)

American Hi-Fi is about to release their first album with Maverick Records, "Hearts on Parade." A tour will accompany the album.

**PURE VALUE.**

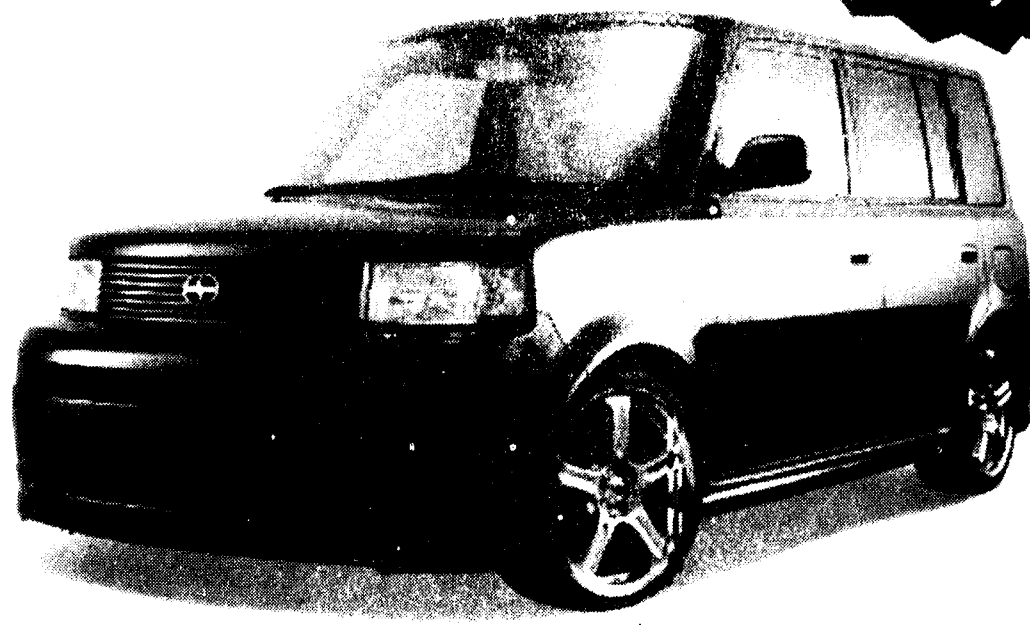
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