

## La Grande Illusion: Special Edition Dir Jean Renoir, 1939, Optimum, 110 mins

*The Colditz Story*, this isn't. *La Grande Illusion* predated both the Ealing comedies and Sixties kitchen sink dramas. Renoir's masterful depiction of class struggle, the essence of war and the death of the aristocracy, set among the German countryside and prisoner of war camps of World War I, is at once poetic and resonant, capturing man's struggle to redefine himself and cope with societal restrictions. Upon France's occupation, the Nazis named Renoir 'Cinematographic Enemy Number One' and attempted to destroy the original print. (It was rediscovered in the Sixties.) Viewed through the distorting lens of time, it stands as a warm, engaging study of friendship and duty, even if the prison camp japes do feel a little boarding school.



## Special

### Dir Hal Haberman & Jeremy Passmore, 2006, Revolver, 82 mins

Les (Michael Rapaport) is depressed. Les signs up for a trial course of secret, new anti-depressants. Les loves comic books. The drugs start to have an adverse effect on Les, but he doesn't realise (he's on drugs). Les starts to imagine himself as a superhero – not the world-beating kind like Wonder Woman, but a down-to-earth Daredevil who foils bag-snatchers. We see Les running through walls, levitating, with psychic powers. Trouble is, Les isn't a superhero. He's ill. To make matters worse, two men in suits are out to keep Les' mental tumult a secret. *Special* initially comes across like a cross between *Batman* and *The Office*, before Rapaport's astonishing performance takes the film into far darker, more worrying places.



## Bob Le Flambeur

Dir Jean-Pierre Melville, 1955, Optimum, 98 mins  
*Ocean's Eleven*, this isn't. *Bob Le Flambeur* is – as *Village Voice* put it – something like the cinematic Birth of Cool, and heavily influenced both the French New Wave of the Sixties (François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Éric Rohmer) and directors such as Scorsese and Tarantino. Set among the late-night drinking bars and gambling dens of a stylish, jazz-age Paris, it features a stunning performance from Roger Duchesne as the laconic, ironic Bob, a retired crook and full-time gambler, who returns to his old ways for one last job. Bob and his protégé Paulo (Daniel Cauchy) both fall for the prematurely cynical Anne (Isabelle Corey), dice are loaded, much coffee and cigarettes are imbibed... every frame is a breathtaking exercise in black-and-white iconography – incredible post-war film noir. Wonder why France is still held to be so insufferably cool? Watch this.

## deep magick

Words: Chris Anderson

Murder, dodgy sex, fairies, aged anarchists, the Serbian *Harry Potter*...it must be Raindance!



Huldufólk 102

Revenge, murder, dodgy sex and drugs are all over the 14th annual Raindance Film Festival. That's not to say there's nothing else on offer at this mighty 12-day showcase of independent film, but it did sometimes seem slanted that way.

Thus we start with **London To Brighton**, a "gritty, urban, Britflick"™ concerning a young girl who is co-opted into a world of prostitution via a bitch-slapping pimp. Stereotypical gangland characters act out a loveless, pointless and one-dimensional storyline. **The Boys And Girls Guide To Getting Down** is a light-heartedly comprehensive guide to getting your rocks off. There are tips for the party animal including: how to blag your way into clubs, the magick art of pussy power, avoiding tricksters such as 'fauxmosexuals', the importance of dancing (boys!) and a rather

## Eighty per cent of Icelanders will not deny the existence of little people

lengthy section on drug etiquette, particularly cocaine (yawn).

Elsewhere, Icelandic documentary **Huldufólk 102** is a thoroughly engaging and charming film concerning the widely held belief in a parallel world of little hidden people living in houses in the rocks. There is a certain wisdom borne of living amid such overwhelming natural beauty. Eighty per cent of Icelanders will not deny the existence of the hidden people and even roads have been built in such a way as to avoid certain rocks. Only the spiritually open can see these beings, hence many sightings by children. As the lady said, "In most societies, people want a deeper knowledge beyond what they can physically see..." Aurally complemented by Arvo Pärt, Múm and Sigur Rós.

Music is a key component of Raindance. **El Calentito** is a delightful Spanish film with a political edge about Sara, a virgin who goes to see a punky girl band called Las Sioux and ends up in the band. Utterly endearing, colourful, positive and feminine. **There Is No Authority But Yourself** is a timely reminder of how Crass' ideals are as pertinent today as ever they were. The ethos of working together, irrespective of class roots, and the rejection of Capitalism, lives on in their Epping retreat, an open house where Permaculture weekends are the norm. This documentary has one classic scene where a naked Penny Rimbaud offers to curl one out for the cameras on his bio-sustainable toilet. Rimbaud curls up again as a malevolent presence in the groovy mini-fable, **Girlfriend In A Kimono**, a nicely shot and perfectly formed short in which he appears to control the love life of the beautiful Candice.

**Unauthorised And Proud of it: Todd Loren's Rock'N'Roll Comics** examines the life, work and death of controversial First Amendment crusader and comic publisher Todd Loren, whose comics got him into all sorts of scrapes with attorneys over infringement of copyright; his eventual murder in 1992 signalling the end of an era.

Finally, **Shaitan's Warrior** is a Serbian film, part-*Harry Potter* with a whiff of *Buffy* in a school geek revenge fantasy. One minute our geeky guy's being chased through the woods by skinheads, the next he's led into a ghostly realm whereupon he inadvertently awakens an extremely angry seven-foot tall creature with Spock's ears, ram's horns and an insatiable appetite for murdering. Fortunately for the geek, he's on hand to help him.

Thoroughly enjoyable.

