

Issue #4 | February 2019

GIRLS, ON FILM
THE FOOD ISSUE

THE STUFF ~ FAST FOOD ~ MYSTIC PIZZA ~ THE MILAGRO BEANFIELD WAR ~ TAMPOPO ~ EAT THE RICH ~ THE PEANUT BUTTER SOLUTION ~ RETURN OF THE KILLER TOMATOES!

thegirlsonfilmzine@gmail.com



GIRLS, ON FILM ON FOOD MOVIES

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ESSAYS BY SARA DANISH, STEPHANIE MCDEVITT, KIM ROBINSON AND JANENE SCELZA
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THE ZINE

Welcome to the fourth installment of *Girls, on Film*, a zine hopelessly devoted to 80s movies! In each issue, we discuss a handful of movies related to a particular theme. This time it's food, so pull up a chair, grab a plate, and help yourself to a heaping portion of 80s goodness!

Here's what's on the menu:

MYSTIC PIZZA Julia Roberts, Annabeth Gish, and Lily Taylor work at a New England pizza joint in this coming-of-age rom com.

THE MILAGRO BEANFIELD WAR Residents of a rural town vie with a wealthy developer over water in Robert Redford's whimsical adaptation.

TAMPOPO A fledgling restaurateur trains to be a great ramen chef in this Japanese indie comedy.

EAT THE RICH A double agent, boorish Home Secretary, and an unemployed waiter are at the center of this crazy British comedy.

THE PEANUT BUTTER SOLUTION Scaring himself bald is just the start of one kid's problems in Canada's freakiest kid's movie.

RETURN OF THE KILLER TOMATOES! A mad scientist must be stopped in this hilarious horror comedy starring a young George Clooney.

THE STUFF A corporate saboteur discovers that a wildly popular dairy treat is brainwashing and then killing all who eat it.

FAST FOOD Jim Varney and Traci Lords star in a pseudo T&A comedy about competing fast food restaurants.

THE GIRLS

This zine is co-founded by Stephanie McDevitt and Janene Scelza. Guest writing for this issue are the awesome Sara Danish and Kim Robinson!

STEPHANIE MCDEVITT was born at the dawn of the 80s and has great appreciation for all movies, music, and fashion that came out of this radical decade. You can find her celebrating at 80s dance parties.

JANENE SCELZA has written a buttload of zines. She spent much of her high school years combing musty video stores for every 80s movie her hometown had to offer. There were lists.

SARA DANISH likes jeans, boots, and pizza. Her parents had HBO in the 80s, which led to her consumption of PG-13 and R-rated movies at a young age. This is her zine debut, thanks to the generous spirit of the editors.

KIM ROBINSON has been an avid fan of pop culture since her early days in the 1990s as an arts and entertainment editor for her college newspaper. Also born on the cusp of the best decade ever, she has always been a rabid consumer of 80s music, fashion, and film, has made a career in the field of arts and culture. She can also sometimes be seen at local 80s dance parties.



EVERYDAY GOURMET: MYSTIC PIZZA (1988)

WRITTEN BY AMY HOLDEN JONES, PERRY HOWZE, RANDY HOWZE, AND ALFRED UHRY

DIRECTED BY DONALD PETRIE

ESSAY BY STEPHANIE MCDEVITT

The summer after high school is that strange time between childhood and adulthood when the excitement and trepidation of the future and the nostalgia for the past all come together and create this breathless feeling of freedom and fear. *Mystic Pizza* follows Daisy, Kat, and JoJo, who are all caught up in this feeling, trying to find their way, figure out their futures, and deal with relationships that aren't meeting their expectations.

The movie begins with JoJo's (Lily Taylor) wedding to Bill (Vincent D'Onofrio). As she walks down the aisle, it is abundantly clear that Jo does not want

to get married, and when she passes out at the altar, the wedding is put on hold. JoJo wrestles with the fact that she is not ready for serious commitment or children. Even though she loves Bill, she doesn't want to marry him right now. Unfortunately for JoJo, Bill doesn't want to be with her if they're not going to get married.

Daisy (Julia Roberts) falls for Charlie (Adam Storke), a preppy rich kid who got kicked out of law school for cheating. Despite being from opposite sides of the tracks, Daisy and Charlie are determined to make their relationship work. They



THE FACE OF A WOMAN WHO DOESN'T WANT TO MARRY.

are forced to contend with their differences (not only class differences but also Daisy's immigrant roots) and their contentious relationships with their parents.

Kat (Annabeth Gish), Daisy's younger sister, works three jobs as she prepares to attend Yale in the Spring semester. She picks up a gig helping Tim (William R. Moses) care for his 4-year-old daughter while Tim's wife is in Europe. Kat quickly starts crushing on Tim, who is much older than she is. It eventually comes out that Tim isn't super happy in his marriage and he sleeps with Kat. When his wife returns home, Kat is left heartbroken.



THE BABYSITTER'S SEDUCTION BEGINS.

In the middle of their relationships drama, all three girls hold down jobs at Mystic Pizza. This movie is structured in such a way that you see Daisy, JoJo, and Kat off with their respective love interests, and in between those scenes, they all return

to the pizzeria. This set-up gives the pizzeria a home-like quality, which is further strengthened by Leona (Conchata Ferrel), the owner of Mystic Pizza and mother figure to all three girls. They do have scenes in their homes with their parents, but the pizzeria seems to be a more loving, accepting environment for all of them.

In addition to the pizzeria, there are a number of shots of Mystic, CT, which is an uncredited character in this movie. There are scenes of the girls walking or riding through town, of Bill on his fishing boat, or of the exterior of the pizzeria. You definitely get a feel for this out-of-season coastal town and it helps to pace the movie in a way that makes it feel a little slower and a little more laid back. I went to Mystic when I was in high school and ate at [Mystic Pizza](#). As I remember, the town was charming and the pizza was pretty good.

What I like most about this movie is that, at some point, JoJo, Daisy, and Kat all get a chance to stand up for themselves within their relationships. JoJo consistently tells Bill she's not ready for marriage, and she struggles with it mightily throughout the movie. In the end, when they do get married, she tells him that she still wants her independence and her identity, to which he agrees.

When Charlie takes Daisy to dinner at his parent's house, he yells at his family for making disparaging remarks about the blue-collar Portuguese population that resides in Mystic. Instead of siding with him, Daisy calls Charlie out for using her to piss off his dad. She insists that his family was just being themselves, and, by bringing home a poor, immigrant girl, he instigated the whole situation. Daisy tells Charlie that if he's going to treat her that way, he isn't good enough for her.

Kat, whose situation is the most messed up, is devastated when Tim's wife comes home. Tim took advantage of his younger, impressionable babysitter and then left her out to dry. In the end,



KAT SHOULD HAVE PUT THE CHECK IN THE MEAT SLICER.

he shows up at the pizzeria to say goodbye and gives her a check to help with her tuition to Yale. Instead of accepting the money that she really needs, Kat rips up the check. As Roger Ebert [said](#), “The movie isn’t really about three girls in love; it’s about three girls discovering what their standards for love are going to be.”

I also enjoy the sibling relationship between Daisy and Kat. At one minute they are at each other’s throats and the next everything is fine. They have a huge fight when Kat forgets she’s supposed to take Daisy’s shift at the pizzeria so Daisy can go meet Charlie’s parents, and Kat calls Daisy a whore (which nicely sets up the scene in which Tim gives Kat money for tuition after they sleep together). Daisy slaps her and storms out. But later, when Kat is sobbing after her night with Tim, Daisy comforts her. They are both obviously weighed down by their roles in their family - Daisy, the wild, crazy, screw-up and Kat, the smart, well-behaved, baby - and they are both struggling to break out of established childhood molds while continually falling back into them.

Mystic Pizza marked Julia Roberts’ first major role and critics gave her favorable reviews. Despite the fact that the *L.A. Times* [referred](#) to her as “the younger sister of actor Eric,” most critics predicted big things to come. In fact, the acting was well reviewed all around even if the movie wasn’t (although I would say reviews were mixed). All three



THE 80S WAS ABOUT BIG HAIR AND BIG BOWS.

actresses were just getting their start and they were all very young. Both Roberts and Taylor were only 21 at the time the movie was released, and Gish was just 17. Also, a young Matt Damon appears for a very brief time in his first movie role.

Like most 80s movies these days there is apparently a remake of sorts in the works. According to [Stereogum](#) and [Deadline](#), Melissa Ethridge is working on the music for *Mystic Pizza: The Musical*, proving that Tina Fey is clairvoyant. You see, in [season 2 of 30 Rock](#), Jenna Maroney has a starring role in a *Mystic Pizza* musical and gains a ton of weight when she has to eat 32 slices of pizza on stage every week. You can listen to a small part of one of the pizza-related songs from that *30 Rock* episode on [Youtube](#).

Mystic Pizza does not really lend itself to the musical format, and I cannot imagine how this will turn out, assuming it comes to fruition. I would say you should watch the original before seeing any other version of this movie. It’s a sweet movie, and definitely a classic that should be on any 80s movie watch list.

WHERE TO FIND: Available through multiple streaming services. Also DVD and Blu-ray.



IT TAKES A VILLAGE: THE MILAGRO BEANFIELD WAR (1988)

WRITTEN BY JOHN NICHOLS

DIRECTED BY ROBERT REDFORD

ESSAY BY SARA DANISH

I was turned on to this 1988 adaptation of the John Nichols novel because it was directed by Robert Redford. And I was not let down. *The Milagro Beanfield War* is the colorful and sometimes whimsical story of a rural town in New Mexico confronting developers who wish to transform their land into a recreation area for the rich. Even if the film experiences identity confusion, the mix of comedy and drama with social commentary lands

in a wholehearted fashion. Viewers are treated to a stellar cast (Christopher Walken, John Heard, Sonia Braga, Ruben Blades and Melanie Griffith, to name a few) playing mostly believable characters.

The harsh, vast New Mexico setting, an original score, and a motley crew of townspeople add a lot of color. *The Milagro Beanfield War* might have

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been something great if Redford had deepened the Western-like qualities by letting the villains stick to their guns and the hardships of the terrain equate to some real suffering. Or had he put some more research into Chicano folklore. Of course, either choice might have reduced the 80s Hollywood feel.



CHICANO FOLKLORE, SEVEN SEALS STYLE.

The Milagro Beanfield War opens with the “crazy,” sage, old man puttering around his rustic one-room shack in the arid landscape of Milagro, a rural New Mexico town. He is conversing with his second main companion (the first being a large pig known as a lovable nuisance among the townspeople), an angel in the body of another jovial old man, outfitted with a poncho and sombrero.

Protagonist Joe Madragon, (Chick Vennera), cannot find well-paid work despite his best efforts. Out of frustration, he kicks and breaks a water line on his deceased father’s dormant plot of land, unleashing a host of personal and communal problems. For reasons unclear, it is strictly forbidden to use this water line, which is controlled by a private developer building condos and golf courses in the Miracle Valley. Joe knows this, but the broken water line gives him the idea to cultivate a bean field. As news spreads of Joe’s act of defiance, mayhem ensues!

The rich developer of the Miracle Valley, Ladd Devine (Richard Bradford), entreats the Gover-

nor and other officials to crush Joe’s “insurrection” using local law enforcement. Importantly, he also contracts a hired gun named Kiryl Montana (Christopher Walken) to make certain that Joe and the Milagro townspeople come to their senses.

My two favorite scenes come early in the film. In the first, Herbie Platt (Daniel Stern) arrives in Milagro from NYU seeking a homestay and part-time work so he can do research for his sociology thesis on the Indigenous traditions of the southwest. This “stick out like a sore thumb” moment is well played as Herbie conveys the serious, genuine nature of his efforts to document Milagro life at whatever cost. He helps Joe cultivate his new bean field. Herbie quickly becomes acquainted with the old rambling man, who, in predictable fashion, becomes Herbie’s “Mr. Miyagi.”



SUGGESTING THAT JOE TRY THE NICKNAME “WET BANDIT.”

My second favorite scene is the town hall meeting organized by Ruby Archuleta (played by Brazilian actress Sonia Braga). Ruby tries to leverage Joe’s mishap to inspire her community to rise up against the elites who are taking their land and making hollow promises to compensate them through development. Knowing that the water rights issue is complex, she tricks the local retired activist lawyer and newspaper printer Charlie Bloom (John Heard) into explaining the situation.

Heated debate ensues in the shabby town hall and the differing viewpoints, hopes, and fears are

thrown around in pseudo chaotic fashion. Nothing is resolved before local law enforcement (pressured by the developer) breaks up the meeting and arrests Charlie on trumped up charges of intent to incite riot. Ruby, undeterred, bails out Charlie and strikes a deal with him to publish her opinion pieces and cover the story of Joe's bean field.

Ruby's strength is evident from the film's opening sequence, where we see her running her own auto body and delegating to two young men. Then she is mobilizing the townspeople, encouraging Joe and finding compromise with Charlie. She's the heroine, though by the end of the movie it might escape you because Joe's successful harvest of the beanfield and simultaneous retreat of the Developer eclipses all.

Ruby isn't the only strong, interesting female voice. Joe's wife is loving and thoughtful and challenges Joe's choices while still being supportive. This is not dissimilar from Ladd's wife (Melanie Griffith), though from a position of immense wealth and comfort. Showing all the signs of a trophy wife, Griffith still manages to charm. One of her best lines in the *The Milagro Beanfield War* is natural and punchy for the blonde who we thought had nothing important to say: "does the world really need another golf course?"

Christopher Walken is truly the stand-out of the film. Fun fact: Walken was in 15 movies in the 1980s, including *Biloxi Blues*, *Puss in Boots* and *Homeboy*, all released the same year as *The Milagro Beanfield War*! Walken's presence as the shrewd, lone, alleged defender of the law is perfection and made me want to see him in a real Western. It seems his most notable quotable from the movie is: "this posse couldn't find itself." That certainly got a chuckle out of me.

And that's what this movie does – it elicits chuckles. And right down to the end when (spoiler alert) Kyril, having been forced to retreat from arresting



KYRIL AIN'T KOOL WITH FUNNY BUSINESS.

Joe, gracefully backs down and gives the cowboy wink and half smile to the watching crowd. In the real world, or say a western, would he have been such a good loser? Nope. But that's what helps make this movie quintessentially Hollywood 1980s. Let's not forget the end of the *Karate Kid* when the defeated villain says, "You're alright Danny LaRusso!"

Roger Ebert gave the movie 2.5 out of three stars, [concluding](#) that "the result is a wonderful fable, but the problem is, some of the people in the story know it's a fable and others do not." Vincent Canby of the *New York Times* [called it](#) a "veritable fiesta of anti-climaxes." And that it "has a touristy appreciation for all manner of things folkloric." I would have to agree with both critics.

In the end, the serious issues of land and water rights, the distortionary and unjust use of money in politics, and what to preserve on the path to development, are treated rather lightly. I can't help but wonder if the plot would have retained a more serious tone had it been made decade or two earlier, bringing the energy of the socially conscious 60s and 70s. Did Redford understand this, but ultimately chose to get with the times?

WHERE TO FIND: Rent online or buy on DVD and Blu-ray. Full-length bootlegs are available on YouTube.



A RAMEN WESTERN: TAMPOPO (1985)

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY JUZO ITAMI

ESSAY BY JANENE SCELZA

Juzo Itami's wonderful indie comedy, *Tampopo*, is the quintessential food movie. It has been dubbed a Ramen Western (referencing, of course, Spaghetti Westerns), and the first of its kind, with Itami using elements of the genre to tell the story of a woman training to be a great noodle chef. But, the movie isn't just about noodles. Periodically, the camera meanders from this central story to briefly observe the prevalence of food – all kinds of food – in all aspects of Japanese life (and death). "Food isn't just consumed in *Tampopo*," [observed](#) film critic Serena Donadoni, "every bite is an ode to life."

Tampopo even opens with one such vignette. A Yakuza gangster (Kôji Yakusho) and his girlfriend are being served an elegant meal in an ordinary movie theater. As they wait for the movie to start, the gangster addresses the audience to ask what they are eating. He pleasantly muses about the sound of crumpling chip bags and other noises ruining the sanctity of the viewing experience. Suddenly, he is interrupted by a man in the row behind him eating loudly. The gangster threatens to kill the man if he continues to be noisy when the movie begins. He then returns to his conversation with the audience.



MEET OLD MAN, THE FIRST RAMEN HIPSTER.

This follows with a scene in which an old man instructs an eager young apprentice on the proper method for eating ramen. Carefully observe every item in the bowl. Demonstrate affection by gently caressing the surface with the chopsticks. Apologize to the pork slices. It turns out to be a story within a story, with the passage being read by one of the main characters (Ken Watanabe as a milk truck driver named Gun) who pauses to comment on how utterly ridiculous it sounds. (Several times in the movie *Itami* celebrates individualism over dogma). The story also makes him hungry.

Gun and his partner, Goro (Tsutomu Yamazaki), stop to eat at a shabby noodle restaurant where Tampopo (played by Itami's wife, Nobuko Miyamoto) serves mediocre Ramen to pathetic souls. One of the regulars, Pisuken (Rikiya Yasuoka), drunkenly tells Tampopo that she should just give up, marry him, and move with him and her son to Paris. (How romantic!). Goro comes to Tampopo's defense and tells Pisuken to pipe down. It leads to a brawl and Goro, outnumbered, loses. Tampopo nurses his wounds.

At the breakfast table the next morning, Goro, Gun, and Tampopo's son (played by Itami's son, Mampei Ikeuchi) discuss Tampopo's cooking. Tampopo explains that she inherited the restaurant from her husband when he died, but she is not a confident cook. She asks for Goro and Gun's frank opinion of her ramen and they admit that it's

not very good. Goro gives her some useful pointers like how to observe the customer and how to slice the meat.

As the men are preparing to leave town, Tampopo rushes to their truck to tell Goro that he has inspired her to improve her noodle making, and ultimately, her restaurant. She asks him to teach her and he accepts.

Goro immediately sets to work. He trains Tampopo to work efficiently. They observe other noodle chefs at work. Goro even has Tampopo run laps and do stretching exercises (presumably, a little nod to *Rocky*). But, improving Tampopo's noodles as well as her restaurant is far more than Goro can do, even with Gun's help.



NOODLEMAKERS, ASSEMBLE!

Goro assembles a crack team of ramen enthusiasts. An old master for the broth. A chauffeur who knows noodles. And Pisuken, who joins the team after a truce, reveals that his is a contractor who can help revamp the restaurant. They all lovingly share their knowledge, and Tampopo never seems to waiver in her eagerness to learn nor her appreciation for their help.

As previously mentioned, *Tampopo* periodically meanders from its central story. Itami treated his films as essays rather than strict narratives. The point was not to tell one story about Japanese life, but many (and for this he is often compared to

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French director, Jacques Tati, who did something similar, but about French life, in his Mr. Hulot comedies in the 1950s and 60s). Itami's style was free form; the camera would occasionally stray from the main characters to follow a stranger passing through the scene. The funny (and sometimes odd) vignettes are tied together to the larger story through the commonality of food.

We see a junior executive stun his superiors by breaking protocol to order a fancy French meal. An etiquette teacher tells her pupils they should never slurp their noodles, only to be interrupted by a large man loudly scarfing down his. The gangster and his girlfriend use food as foreplay. A man is pained by a wicked toothache. A woman rises from her deathbed to cook one last meal for her family. A vagrant breaks into a kitchen to make a flawless rice omelet. A conman asks to finish eating before his arrest. A man in his last moments of life explains how to prepare wild boar. And, in what feels like an ode to vaudeville, an old woman sneaks around a grocery store, squeezing the food.



EASY PEASY SQUEEZY SQUEEZY.

I had read somewhere years ago that *Tampopo* demonstrates a reverence for food in a way that is alien to Westerners. True, the film pre-dated foodie culture. But, as Roger Ebert [said](#) in his 1987 review: "to American eyes, the specifics were foreign perhaps, but in the land of sweet corn festivals, bake-offs, and contests for the world's best

chili, the pursuit wasn't." Of course, the specifics (at least the food-related ones) are no longer foreign, especially ramen restaurants, which can be found all over the United States. Some are even named Tampopo.



PUTTING THE RAMEN TO THE TEST.

As it turned out, *Tampopo*, which was only Juzo Itami's second feature film, was his first to gain international success. (He would make eight more before his [contested suicide](#) in 1997). In fact, the movie flopped when it released in Japan in 1985. Mark Schilling of *The Japanese Times* [suggested](#) that Itami's methods were a bit too unconventional for Japanese audiences at the time. However, American critics were seemingly unanimous in their praise when it was released in the United States two years later. I first stumbled across the movie as a teenager and, despite grumbling about subtitled foreign films, I absolutely loved it.

For a long time, copies of the movie had been very hard to track down. Fortunately, [Criterion](#) added the film to its collection in 2016, releasing a beautifully remastered print on Blu-Ray and DVD. The special features also include Itami's extensive making-of documentary, which is nearly as long as the movie itself ([it's also on YouTube](#)).

WHERE TO FIND: Available on DVD and Blu-ray. Look for subtitled bootlegs on YouTube, but you may need to log since it contains nudity.



CANADIAN BEDTIME STORIES: THE PEANUT BUTTER SOLUTION (1985)

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY VOJTECH JASNÝ, ANDRÉE PELLETIER, LOUISE PELLETIER, AND MICHAEL RUBBO

DIRECTED BY MICHAEL RUBBO

ESSAY BY STEPHANIE MCDEVITT

The *Peanut Butter Solution* is a kids movie. Well, it's supposed to be a kids movie, but it is super messed up. I saw it when I was younger, and while my memory of the movie was choppy, I do recall being terrified of it. It has fires, death, ghostly encounters, and a kidnapper, so after rewatching it, I understand why I was so scared. Filmed in Quebec and originally released in Canada, this movie is usually regarded as one of the scariest kids' movies to come out of the 1980s.

Early one morning before school, Michael's (Michael Macaky) friend Connie (Siluck Saysanasy) comes over and tells him about a fire that gutted an abandoned house where homeless people were living. Michael, concerned about the people in the house, some of whom he'd given money, wanted to check it out. Against Connie's advice, Michael climbs into the burned-out house, and while inside he sees something that scares him so bad, he passes out.



THERE IS A BIG FRIGHT LURKING IN THERE.

Connie manages to get Michael home in a shopping cart, where Michael eventually wakes up, but cannot remember what it was that scared him. The next morning, he wakes up completely bald. Cue the melodrama. Michael is devastated that he's bald. He's totally inconsolable. His dad (Michael Hogan) takes him to the doctor where they determine that Michael's hair loss is due to the fright he experienced in the burned-out house (for the record, we never find out what scared him).

One night after waking up from a bad dream, Michael wanders downstairs and has an encounter with the ghosts of the homeless people who died in the fire. They give him a disgusting recipe for a hair growth solution, which he is supposed to put on his head and later wash off. This recipe includes things like dead flies, spider webs, and, of course, peanut butter (courtesy of Skippy).

Well, what do you know? The peanut butter solution works and Michael's hair starts to grow back. However, it doesn't stop growing. By the time he gets home from school that day, he looks like Cousin Itt. Michael's hair becomes such a distraction at school that he and Connie eventually get kicked out, even after Michael gives an impassioned speech about wanting to be educated.

While Michael is dealing with his curious hair problems, the art teacher at his school, the Signor,



MICHAEL AND HIS LUXURIOUS LOCKS.

(Michel Maillot) is stirring up trouble. After telling the children they are not allowed to use their imaginations in art class and tearing up the paintings of those kids who do, we eventually learn that he has been thrown out of two schools, changed his name and appearance four times, and made false claims about being Rembrandt's direct descendant. So, obviously, he gets fired.

The day after Michael gets kicked out of school, he attempts to go anyway, but it is terribly windy and his hair makes it difficult to walk outside. He tries to hide from the wind, but the Signor sees him and kidnaps him. After Michael is snatched off the street, we see several newspapers that report more than 20 children in the town have disappeared!

It turns out that the Signor kidnapped Michael so he could use his hair to make magic paintbrushes. These paintbrushes allow you to paint pictures that you can walk into (kind of like the chalk drawings in *Mary Poppins*). The Signor kidnapped all the other children so he could have workers to make said paintbrushes. Connie and Michael's sister, Suzie (Alison Darcy), eventually figure out what's going on and Connie tries to go rescue Michael, but he also ends up getting kidnapped.

While being held captive by the Signor, Connie convinces him to paint the burned-out house and go

into the painting to see what scared Michael. The Signor accepts the challenge and ends up getting frightened just like Michael did. The Signor loses his hair and has now broken the curse on Michael's hair, which finally stops growing. The police eventually show up, all the children are freed, and Michael makes his way home to his family.



EL SIGOR GETS NABBED.

The *Peanut Butter Solution* is a Canadian movie produced by Rock Demers, whose production company, Les Productions la Fête, also produced a children's series called *Tales for All*. Apparently his production company [was known as](#) "The Disney of the North" in the 80s. Demers was one of the few people making kids' movies in Canada at the time.

The plot for the movie [originated from a bedtime story](#) Director Michael Rubbo was telling his kid. What the hell kind of bedtime story is that? Aside from the actual deaths of the homeless people and their ghostly visits, this movie is rife with motifs of loss and death and explores how people deal with loss and absence.

Michael loses all of his hair and falls apart. But prior to losing his hair, he had temporarily lost his mother. She is absent for most of the movie in a weird storyline that has her in Australia dealing with her deceased father's estate, while Suzie (who can't be more than 13) cooks, cleans, pays the bills, and takes care of Michael and his dad.

She even wears her mom's robe around the house. It's kind of creepy and there are vague incestual tones to the whole thing. Michael is constantly asking to call his mother and his dad won't let him.

For most of the movie I thought it would eventually be revealed that Michael's mom wasn't coming back. I thought she had left his dad, but his dad couldn't deal with it so he lied about where she was. She does return but it's definitely a weird plot point. Michael also loses his opportunity to go to school and eventually loses his freedom. This is a lot for an 11-year-old to deal with, and a crazy story to tell to try to get your child to go to sleep.

I had a hard time finding any box office statistics for this movie. I assume *The Peanut Butter Solution* was released in Canadian movie theaters, but it also had a huge following on TV. It aired on HBO in the states and I guess gained its US following from TV broadcasts.

One final note, *The Peanut Butter Solution* soundtrack marked the first English songs recorded by Celine Dion (she also recorded them in French for the French version of this movie). She was about 17 at the time and sang two songs on the soundtrack. You can see a [video](#) of one of those songs, "Magic Man," on YouTube that features both scenes from the movie and a very young Dion. The song is just as ridiculous as the plot line of the movie.

I'm pretty sure *The Peanut Butter Solution* gave me nightmares when I was a kid, and why wouldn't it? There's a scary teacher, a kidnapping plot, an absent mother, and uncontrollable hair growth. I would recommend checking it out simply because it's so weird, but please do not show it to your kids until they are older.

WHERE TO FIND: Available on DVD and VHS. Also available for free on YouTube.



TAKE THE BASTARDS WITH YOU: EAT THE RICH (1987)

WRITTEN BY PETER RICHARDSON AND PETE RICHENS

DIRECTED BY PETER RICHARDSON

ESSAY BY JANENE SCELZA

Eat the Rich is a raucous British comedy that lampoons life during Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's awful reign (they didn't call her the Iron Lady for nothing!). The title is a reference to philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau's observation that, when the commoners have nothing more to eat, they will eat the rich. The movie centers around a double agent, his boorish nemesis, and a group of casual revolutionaries that might prove useful in bringing down the miserable bloke. Order up!

Eat the Rich was one of two feature film vehicles for the British alternative comedy troupe, The

Comic Strip. It's core members included Robbie Coltrane; Jennifer Saunders (of *Ab Fab* fame); her long-time collaborator, Dawn French; most of the cast of *The Young Ones*; and Peter Richardson, who co-wrote and directed the movie.

Eat the Rich also heavily features the band, Motörhead. They performed most of the soundtrack while frontman, Lemmy, had a prominent supporting role. They also brought their friends! Paul and Linda McCartney, Jools Holland, Angie Bowie, Hugh Cornwall of *The Stranglers*, and ex-Rolling Stones bassist Bill Wyman all have cameos.

The movie opens with sassy protagonist, Alex (Al Pillay), [waiting tables at Bastards](#), a fancy restaurant where the filthy rich dine on exotic animals. The insufferable clientele grate on him until he snaps and literally turns the tables on them. Alex is promptly fired, and, for some sudden reason, is left penniless and homeless.

In search of shelter, Alex befriends a hairy gentleman named Ron (Ron Tarr). They plead their case at the dole office, only to be insulted by smug, cocktail-sipping bureaucrats. Alex conveniently finds a gun and blows them away and then continues firing the gun at random outside while yelling that society drove him to it. With police sirens in the distance, Alex and Ron flee, though not before indulging a delighted reporter's request for a headline photo.



COMMANDER FORTUNE AND SPIDER DO SOME SCHEMING.

Meanwhile, we're introduced to the very British Commander Fortune (Ronald Allen), an intelligence officer secretly working for the KGB. He and his sidekick, Spider (Lemmy), spy on the awful Cockney Home Secretary, Noshier (played by former heavyweight boxer, Noshier Powell). Fortune worries that Noshier could become Prime Minister – something Noshier's social-climbing wife (Sandra Dorne) is pushing him towards – and plots ways to involve him in a scandal. The only problem with Fortune's plan is that, while Noshier is an incessant ass, he is also surprisingly invincible. (How timely!)



NOSHER WORKS THE CROWD.

In one scene, Fortune's fellow KGB agent, Fiona, seduces Noshier, and the press catch them together. Rabid reporters swarm his door the next morning as Noshier's wife braces for a scandal. But, Noshier confronts them in his underwear and casually slut-shames Fiona as the reporters all but high-five him. So, when Commander Fortune reads about Alex and Ron in the paper, he quietly decides to aid their cause, hoping they might finally be the key to bringing down Noshier.

Meanwhile, Alex and Ron have declared war on the bourgeoisie and go to the countryside (because Karl Marx) to nonchalantly recruit fellow revolutionaries. Alex informs a chronically jolly man named Jimmy that he and Ron are starting a People's War and politely asks if he fancies joining them. They cap out their army at four with the addition of Jimmy, and Fiona, who happened to be driving by. She tearfully tells them that Noshier knocked her up.

The filmmakers pile on gags as we slog through the second act. Alex and the gang go shopping for revolution-friendly wardrobes and supplies. Commander Fortune and Spider meddle in the background. And, Noshier's wife finally gets fed up with his antics and throws him out, so he mopes around, heartbroken. (Turns out he has a vulnerable side, after all!)

There are, apparently, a number of parallels be-

tween *Eat the Rich* and John Ford's 1948 western, *Ft. Apache*. Alex's rival waiter at *Bastards* even boasts about being cast in the remake just as he is shot in the chest with an arrow by Alex who has returned to *Bastards* with Ron, Jimmy, and Fiona to kill every last bastard.



TOUGH CRITICS.

They re-open the restaurant under the new name, *Eat the Rich*, and secretly serve their victims to the insufferable, filthy rich bastards clawing to get in the fabulous new version they've all heard so much about. Commander Fortune and Spider are there, too. Spider passes by the kitchen when he happens to discover what's in the burger. "These people are eating their way through the jet set!" he warns Fortune, who seems curiously bemused. Could this be the contrived opportunity to finally get Noshers?! You bet!

Fortune suggests Noshers take his wife to dinner at *Eat the Rich* because she loves mince and that's all they serve. As they dig into their food, Commander Fortune pops out to reveal that Noshers is in fact dining on the Prime Minister! Gasp!! Paparazzi magically appear and for some reason, this is the moment that Noshers, who didn't know he was eating the Prime Minister, starts to panic. Police raid the place shortly thereafter and the scene descends into a complete and total barf-orama as Alex and the gang flee.

Meanwhile, Fiona goes into labor in the kitchen

and the little whippersnapper unfortunately pops out just as panicking Noshers rushes past. He somehow works it out that the baby is his and carries him away to present him to the other patrons like he was that baboon in the *Lion King* lifting up Simba. Everyone stands agape with adoration. Well, everyone but Fiona, who is devastated that Noshers has her baby.

Alex, Jimmy and Ron come to Fiona's aid and help to smuggle her and the infant out of the restaurant, driving them back to the country. Noshers goes ape shit and pursues them and Fortune follows. The final showdown is perfect.

Eat the Rich had the potential to be a better comedy than it was. It feels very similar to Lou Adler comedies (e.g., *Rock n' Roll High School*, *Get Crazy*) where the "haves" vie with the "have-nots" in a bizarre universe. (I also wonder if this movie inspired the Denis Villeneuve short film, [Next Floor](#)). However, despite this set up, *Eat the Rich* always seemed a bit too restrained. Hal Hinson of the *Washington Post* [compared](#) the movie to "punk on the downward swing, after most of its rude energy has dissipated."

Satirical comedies like these also work best when there's a balance between the story and the gags. Here, the latter really won out, and while there are some very funny moments, there isn't much plot to fall back on. Too bad, because Alex's woefully understaffed People's War was the best part.

Still, it's a delightfully nutty 80s British comedy. For us Yanks, the movie is rather timely given our severe misfortune of doltish and arrogant leadership in Washington, DC, where, I learned in researching this movie, there was a raw bar called [Eat the Rich](#) that recently closed. Imagine that!

WHERE TO FIND: Available on DVD or rent online. Full opening scene available on YouTube.



TOMATOES SQUASHED: RETURN OF THE KILLER TOMATOES! (1988)

WRITTEN BY STEPHEN ANDRICH, JOHN DE BELLO, CONSTANTINE DILLON, AND J. STEPHEN PEACE

DIRECTED BY JOHN DE BELLO

ESSAY BY KIM ROBINSON

A classic 80s, low budget, B-horror movie. A scathing critique on the entertainment industry. A surprisingly successful film franchise. A cult classic and comedy for the ages. All of these descriptions fit John De Bello's *Return of the Killer Tomatoes!* One might ask how this low-budget film, its predecessor, and subsequent sequels become such cult classics? Sit back, relax, and let me introduce you to a world that features tomatoes as an illegal drug, co-stars a dashing, young George Clooney,

and contains so many meta moments you might not be able to keep up.

The Killer Tomatoes series began in 1978 with *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes*. Set in an alternative universe, a mad scientist caused tomatoes to gain sentience. They rebelled against humans, leading to the Great Tomato War (or Uprising). *Return of the Killer Tomatoes!* begins ten years after the war.

GIRLS, ON FILM: THE FOOD ISSUE

Our protagonists are the excitable Chad Finletter, nephew of Tomato War hero, Lt. Wilbur Finletter (Anthony Starke); his best friend Matt Stevens (a suave George Clooney, rocking truly spectacular 80's hair); Chad's mysterious love interest, Tara Boumday (Karen M. Waldron); and her adorable sidekick, Fuzzy Tomato ("F.T."). Together, they try to stop bombastic mad scientist, Professor Mortimer Gangreen (John Astin). Assisting them are Wilbur Finletter's intrepid team: Sam Smith (a master of disguise) and Greg Colburn, the heroes from the first movie.



CHAD AND MATT PREFER TO DO BATTLE IN DENIM.

Our characters live in a world without tomatoes. Pizza is served with peanut butter instead of tomato sauce, and combinations like "pepperoni, extra cheese and boysenberry sauce" or "coconut with anchovies and strawberry jam" are commonplace. The Bureau of Federal Vegetable Investigations monitors for "tomato activity" as the red contraband known as "Acapulco Red" is smuggled in record numbers across the Southern border. Prejudice against the red menace is strong as the only good tomato is a squashed tomato.

The villainous Dr. Gangreen is plotting to upend ten years of tomato-free peace with his co-conspirator from the previous film, former White House Press Secretary Jim Richardson (Rick Rockwell), as well as his henchman, an aspiring reporter named Igor (Steve Lundquist), to once again unleash their deadly tomato mutants upon

humanity. They plan to break Richardson out of the Oliver North Federal Prison (Incarceration with a Difference!) and kick off a reign of saucy terror with Gangreen's army of tomato fighters.

This harrowing tale is set against the backdrop of the love story of Chad and Tara, two star-crossed lovers fighting to be together. It turns out that Tara is one of Dr. Gangreen's mad creations. An attempt at designing the perfect (toast-making) woman, she speaks perfect English, can cook 815 international dishes, and perform 637 sexual acts. And she knows how to use all of the popular home appliances. Tara serves as Dr. Gangreen's lover and assistant, but she escapes from his evil lair after he attempts to terminate F.T. She seeks aid from the only person she happens to know in town, Chad Finletter.



TARA AND HER MAIN SQUEEZE, F.T.

As the plot progresses faster than you can say "Valerian Root Powder," we learn that, just as in the first film, music plays an integral role in the transformation of the deadly fruit. In *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes*, the rampaging giant tomatoes would shrink if exposed to the strains of the worst song ever written, "[Puberty Love](#)." The twist in the sequel is that music, depending on the type of song, will transform a tomato treated in a toxic chemical solution into a human-like figure that serves Dr. Gangreen. Inexplicably, the tomatoes can be returned to their natural form by playing Beethoven's 5th Symphony.

Our story ends in a rather anti-climatic battle at the federal prison. Dr. Gangreen and Igor re-capture Tara, who had run away from Chad after he discovered her “secret.” They drag her at gunpoint to the prison where they intend to break out Richardson. There, they encounter our heroes, led by Chad and his war hero uncle. F.T. makes a heroic sacrifice, saving the day. Tara, now free from Gangreen’s control thanks to a gas chamber incident (you have to see it to believe it), is reunited with Chad and they drive off into the sunset together.

Return of the Killer Tomatoes! is a hilarious 80s romp and a self-deprecating look at the film industry and modern media. This is not a movie to be taken seriously and should be appreciated for its spot-on humor and gags (those first act set-ups really come through in the big finale), its light critique of society’s foibles (including our obsession with media), and for demonstrating how meta can be done right.



SEE HOW CONSERVATION-MINDED THEY ARE!

The filmmakers mock its low-budget with a wink and a nod, often reusing the same actors in multiple scenes. They also riff on the lack of quality special effects, even noting in the theme song that the movie features “no James Bond cars or Top Gun jets or real expensive movie sets.” Even the way the film is framed, introduced as a showing for Channel 73’s *One Dollar Movie* in the tradition of *Mystery Science Theater 3000* (which coincidentally premiered in 1988) at its beginning and

conclusion is a fun gag. And a post-credits scene features armed, Rambo-esque carrots.

These themes are encapsulated in one key moment in the film when the fourth wall is well and truly broken. At the dramatic peak of an argument between Chad and Tara over F.T. mid-movie (Tara is trying to pass him off as a small dog), the scene cuts abruptly to director John De Bello, who says they can’t finish the movie as they have run out of cash. Matt saves the day, however, by suggesting that they use product placement to fund the film. What follows is the most gratuitous use of product placement that I have seen in any movie to date. In just one take the producers manage to squeeze in promotions (with no subtly whatsoever) for Pepsi, Nestle’s Crunch Bar and Goobers candy, Crest Toothpaste, and Kellog’s Corn Flakes.

Critical reception of the film was poor to say the least. The movie only [grossed](#) \$5 million at the box office during its initial release. However, the cultural impact of the deadly mutant fruits cannot be denied. Two more films followed in the early 90s: *Killer Tomatoes Strike Back* and *Killer Tomatoes Eat France*. Video games based on the franchise were released for the [NES](#) in 1986 and [Gameboy](#) in 1991. And, a [cartoon series](#) aired for two seasons on Fox Kids from 1990-91.

I highly recommend this film to any viewer interested in a fun, quasi-horror/comedy flick with a surprising lack of actual tomato gore that makes the most of its over-the-top, 80s setting! It’s cheeky self-awareness, terrible acting, and horrifying (in a good way) soundtrack (songs include “Big Breasted Girls Go to the Beach”) make this campy, cult classic a fun ride. However, it will leave you asking what Tara can do with a lawn chair, six milk bottles, and a tuning fork?

WHERE TO FIND: Available on DVD and Special Edition Blu-Ray or rent online.



SIMPLY IRRESISTIBLE: THE STUFF (1987)

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY LARRY COHEN

ESSAY BY JANENE SCELZA

America's hottest new craze is a gooey dairy treat called The Stuff. One taste is never enough! A private investigator is hired by industry competitors to learn more about the product. What he discovers is a demonic desert that turns all who eat it into mindless zombies (Stuffies) before devouring them altogether. Suddenly, mere corporate espionage turns into a life-or-death mission to get people to give up The Stuff.

The Stuff is a culinary cross between *The Thing*, *The Blob*, and *The China Syndrome*. That Larry Cohen's satire of American consumerism centers

around a vaguely named culprit is rather clever; it is interchangeable with any number of real-world instances of harmful products peddled by greedy corporations. Big Tobacco was cited as a major inspiration, where the industry spent decades hiding the hazards of smoking to sell cigarettes. But, modern culprits aren't hard to find (looking at you, Big Tech or Big Pharma!).

The movie opens at a petroleum plant where one of the employees stumbles upon some mysterious white goo bubbling out of the ground. Perhaps compelled by its mind-controlling powers,

his first instinct is to taste it. Deeelicious! He then offers it to a coworker who is equally satisfied. The pair instantly get dollar signs in their eyes, imagining how they could make a fortune selling this stuff. (If it sounds ridiculous, it was meant to; Cohen was going for campy creature feature than a straight up horror movie).

The Stuff is flying off the shelves. It's not only tasty, but organic, helps you lose weight, and bonus points: doesn't stain! Basically, it's all your wildest dreams come true. Snack food industry executives are desperate to learn what it's made of. But, the people behind the product aren't talking and everyone at the FDA who green-lit The Stuff are conveniently unreachable. So, they hire Mo Rutherford (Michael Moriarty), a witty former FBI agent posing as a Southern dimwit, to do some snooping.



MO AND CHOCOLATE CHIP CHARLIE ARE ON THE CASE!

Mo's investigation leads him to a series of increasingly strange and nefarious characters. A scientist who is baffled by The Stuff's chemical makeup. A paranoid FDA agent (Danny Aiello) who was part of the team that hastily approved the product. An ousted cookie company CEO (Garrett Morris as Famous Amos knockoff, Chocolate Chip Charlie) who briefly helps Mo. A cartoonish postal clerk in a ghost town where the former residents left forwarding addresses for the same city where The Stuff conglomerate owns a mining company. And a brash distributor approached by the people

who discovered (and were apparently addicted to) The Stuff to turn it into a million-dollar enterprise. They all make it clear that this is no ordinary food.

Mo isn't the only one who thinks so. He reads in the paper about a boy named Jason (Scott Bloom) who was arrested for trashing containers of The Stuff at a grocery store. Jason woke one night to discover it writhing in his refrigerator and warn his parents and older brother not to eat it, to no avail.



THE FAMILY THAT STUFF'S TOGETHER, STAYS TOGETHER.

They slowly transform into creepy, All-American zombies who only eat and talk about The Stuff. Jason's dad tells him that only when he eats it can he truly "be part of the family again." Jason tries to fool them by switching the desert with shaving cream, but gets nauseous after a few mouthfuls of Barbasol and blows his cover. They chase after him (because you can't piss on hospitality), but Mo intervenes just in the nick of time, yelling at Jason to get in his car.

It isn't until Mo enlists the help of the woman who handles the advertising campaigns for The Stuff (Andrea Marcovici as Nicole), that he is able to get inside the dystopian petroleum plant where the gooey desert is shockingly siphoned right out of the ground and piped into pastel tubs to be shipped.

The further Mo, Nicole, and tag-along Jason go down the rabbit hole, the more dangerous things



THE GOO IS COMING FOR YOU!

become. The trio spend the second half of the movie dodging Stuffies as well as murderous blobs of The Stuff itself. At one point, it even tries to suffocate Mo like it was the Face Hugger from *Alien*.

Before it's too late, they need to reach the ridiculous Col. Malcolm Grommett Spears (Paul Sorvino), leader of a backwoods militia who operates a radio station, so they can broadcast a message out to the brainwashed masses about the dangers of The Stuff. But, will they succeed? If you know anything about Larry Cohen, expect cynical results.

Critics generally [commend](#) *The Stuff* for rising above what is generally expected of a B-movie: pure schlock with terrible acting and cheesy effects. Though, I prefer film critic Decker Shado's [definition](#): "at its heart, the idea of a B-movie is to take a small budget and deliver a memorable horror experience." And for the most part, *The Stuff* does exactly that.

It's a well-paced, amusing story with some memorable performances. Michael Moriarity seems to be a love-him-or-hate-him lead for critics, but that may have simply been a distaste for a guy with a bowl cut and slow southern drawl. I wish Mo had more screen time with temporary sidekick, Chocolate Chip Charlie (a role originally intended for then-unknown Arsenio Hall), since longer-term

sidekick, Nicole, felt more like a character inserted last minute to cater to studio demands for a love interest.

The Stuff is beautiful-looking film, too. At times, it has a sort of comic book aesthetic. And, because it was a low-budget film, they had to rely on some ingenious special effects such as stop-motion and miniatures. The aforementioned Face Hugger sequence was even inspired by some visual trickery used in the first *Nightmare on Elm Street* movie.

The movie is peppered with [several commercials](#) for *The Stuff*, including one where 80s Wendy's icon, Carla Peller, impatiently asks Abe Vigoda "Where's The Stuff?" Larry Cohen wanted to air the spots prior to the official trailer kind of like an early viral marketing campaign. But, New World Pictures had other ideas. They wanted to market *The Stuff* as a straight horror movie. I imagine that disappointed some movie-goers because, as Cohen has [said](#), they played the characters for laughs and "greatly diluted the horror element."

In fact, much of the first half of the movie treats *The Stuff* like a sort of weird, but not yet terrifying product. It does weird shit to people, but the more disconcerting aspect is that it's being sold and consumed nationwide without anyone really being too sure what exactly it is. It isn't until the second half of the film that *The Stuff* starts racking up a body count. The way New World Pictures preferred it, [observed](#) GoodBadFlicks, leaves you with "a horror movie that is trying to convince you that ice cream is scary."

Despite critical acclaim, *The Stuff* only had a one-month theatrical run. Naturally, it became a cult hit years later. Midnight movie fans: try it out!

WHERE TO FIND: Available to stream on Prime, rent online, or buy on DVD.



AUGGIE'S SECRET SAUCE: FAST FOOD (1989)

WRITTEN BY SCOTT SOWERS, JIM BASILE, LANNY HORN, AND CLARK BRANDON

DIRECTED BY MICHAEL A. SIMPSON

ESSAY BY STEPHANIE MCDEVITT

As we were nearing the end of the 80s, there were some movie producers huddled in a room together asking what would happen if a secret sex potion was mixed into the food at a burger joint. And now we have *Fast Food*, a movie about college buddies trying to get laid, take down a major franchise corporation, and succeed in the fast food biz. To say this movie is unpalatable would be an understatement, so maybe think twice before you order it off the 80s movie menu.

Fast Food follows the adventures of Auggie (Clark Brandon) and Drew (Randal Patrick), two twenty-

somethings who have been in college for eight years. When the Dean catches them running an underground casino, he forcefully graduates them (it sounds like they should have been expelled years ago) and, once in the real world, they need to figure out how to make some money.

Enter Sam (Tracy Griffith) and her underperforming gas station. Sam, who is conveniently Drew's cousin, has decided to sell the family service station because she just can't keep it afloat. Drew is angry that she would sell, but he doesn't seem to understand the ramifications of going bankrupt.



TRYING TO RUN A GAS-STATION THEMED RESTAURANT.

Sam tells the boys that Wrangler Bob Bundy (Jim Varney) wants to buy the station and turn it into another one of his Wrangler Bob's burger joints. Auggie argues that if Wrangler Bob thinks it would be a good place for a burger joint, then why couldn't they just turn it into one themselves? Sam tells Auggie to forget it, and she heads to meet Wrangler Bob to make the sale. However, when she overhears Wrangler Bob talking smack about her dad and their business, she decides not to sell and, despite the fact that she seems to hate Auggie (or does she?), takes him up on his offer to open their own restaurant.

Auggie and Drew have a friend, Calvin (Lanny Horn), with access to a university computer in the science lab, so they go see him to use his computer to get a list of alumni who were in their fraternity so they can find someone who will lend them the money to open the burger place. While they're in the lab, Calvin tells the guys about how his research to help men who suffer from chronic erections went awry, and, at some point, their experimental medicine got messed up and exploded. What resulted was a drug they call Formula 9, which made his female superior sex-crazed. She even jumped Calvin!

Anyway, Auggie is able to get a loan and the music montage of turning the gas station into a gas station-themed restaurant begins. However, once they finally open, they don't get any business. It

turns out that Wrangler Bob is doing promotions at his nearby restaurants to distract from their opening. Also, their burgers look kind of gross. The props department could have done a better job on that.

Finally, the kids get a break when a sorority girl comes in and needs a last-minute caterer for a fancy sorority social. Auggie promises to fulfill her order, but, in an apparent attempt to make their food desirable, he goes into Calvin's lab and steals some Formula 9 and mixes it into their secret burger sauce without telling anyone.



AUGGIE PREPARES TO DRUG THE SORORITY.

The sorority party goes exactly as expected, with all the girls jumping the guys and ripping off their clothes, and from that point forward their business is booming. This, of course, pisses off Wrangler Bob, who sends in a spy, Dixie (Traci Lords), to find out why they are suddenly successful. Dixie finds out about Formula 9, tells Wrangler Bob, and he goes to the FDA and reports them. The FDA shuts down their business on the basis that they lace their food with illegal drugs, and Sam must now go to court and face criminal charges.

It comes out that Auggie spiked the burger sauce, and now everyone hates him (obviously). Auggie decides to go to the college and study up on law, I guess. There is a pretty long montage of Auggie reading tons of books, so I assume he's trying

to gain legal knowledge to help his friends. In the end, he bursts into the courtroom, confesses that it was all his fault, accuses Wrangler Bob of using horrible chemicals in his food, and somehow they all get off and are free to continue to run their restaurant.



CALVIN: THE TOKEN 80S NERD.

This movie doesn't have much going for it. The script is poorly written, it's full of movie cliches, the acting is bad, and the romance between Augie and Sam is boring and predictable. I guess this was supposed to be another 80s sex comedy, but with a PG-13 rating, it couldn't even do that right. Traci Lords, who at the time was a well-known adult film star (her movies were illegal because she was underage), is on the movie poster despite only appearing in a few scenes, which definitely sends a very specific message.

A 1989 review in the *Orlando Sentinel* complained about the lack of breasts in the movie. Joe Bob Briggs [wrote](#) that this movie is an *Animal House* rip-off "except they forgot to tell the girls to take their blouses off when they have sex." A July 2016 review [states](#), "It's really the worst kind of tease; you get a lot of double entendres and oblique references to sex, but you never so much as see a hardened nipple anywhere - not even in the obligatory wet t-shirt contest scene. For shame, for shame." These guys are creeps, and I'm actually surprised the *Sentinel* ran that review, but the movie marketing was misleading.

Now, would more boobs or actual sex have made this a better movie? I guess it depends on who you are. If you're a horny dude desperate to live out a porn fantasy with Traci Lords, maybe (although they do get a scene with Lords in a bubble bath). But for most viewers, there is probably little that could have redeemed it. It's not funny, it's not smart, there are no good jokes, it's pretty misogynistic, and the acting is bad.



WRANGLER BOB THREATENS TO STUFF THE KIDS IN HIS HAT.

The one not totally terrible spot for me (if I was forced to pick one) was Jim Varney as Wrangler Bob. I wrote about Jim Varney's acting ability in the [previous](#) *Girls, On Film* edition when I discussed *Ernest Goes to Camp*. Wrangler Bob is mean, greedy, and the opposite of Ernest. Even though the Wrangler Bob character is mostly one note, it was at least different for Varney. Although, I can't imagine Disney (who produced the Ernest series) was too happy about his appearance in this mildly raunchy, terrible movie.

Fast Food isn't really worth your time. Instead, why don't you grab your friends and go get a burger someplace that will not drug you without your consent?

WHERE TO FIND: Never pay to watch this movie. The curious can find free bootlegs on YouTube.

GIRLS, ON FILM

EMAIL thegirlsonfilmzine@gmail.com

WEB issuu.com/thegirlsonfilmzine

TWITTER [@girlson80sfilms](https://twitter.com/girlson80sfilms)