

work rest & play

by
Doug Aubrey
and
Alan Robertson

"an end-of-the-millennium road movie
that repeatedly crosses over the border
into the emerging virtual landscape
of digital communications
and computer games"

Steven Bode
London Film Festival

Boy Driver
Stefan
Milroy

Voice of the Boy
Driver Greg
Hemphill

GeeBees
Man Bruce
Morton

The Voice of
Reason Alison
Burns

Man with Hammer Gordon Muir
Tender Victoria
Comrades Beattie

Nicky
Dawson

Monika
Piatkowski

Zoe
Shobbrook

Olivia
Spencer

Angel Jacquel Runnells

Original Composition
and Sound Design
Philip Crean

An extract from

On the trail of a Scottish Road Movie
bypassing 'Hollywood on the Clyde'

The road movie as a genre is not so well documented as the western, the gangster movie, the film noir or the horror movie, but it has made its presence felt over the last few decades. The standard critical work in English, Mark Williams' 'Road Movies', lists over one hundred films. His book is better seen as being about the encounter between cinema and wheeled vehicles.

I favour a narrower definition of the genre as being primarily about characters travelling by road across America and finding things out about themselves and their country. For me the classic road movies are Dennis Hopper's 'Easy Rider' (1969) and Monte Hellman's 'Two Lane Blacktop' (1971). Paul Bartel, he himself the director of two (arguably) road movies - 'Deathrace 2000' (1975) and 'Carquake' (1976) - recognises the mythic quality of the genre when he talks about the rise of the road movie coinciding with the decline of the western, suggesting that post-war generations required different images to carry their feelings about America.

My narrower definition would begin with the foreign appropriation of the road movie with the German Wim Wenders' 'Kings of the Road' (1976) and include the Australian Phillip Noyce's 'Backroads' (1977) and the British Chris Petit's 'Radio On' (1978). As one might expect, these latter films are in some respects more cerebral, less visceral, than their American counterparts.

The tradition out of which Work Rest and Play comes can be gauged from its own description of itself as 'a near-future road movie for the video generation' and its blurb which begins 'Imagine travelling through a place where the dark menace of "Alphaville" survives within the vibrant heart of Legoland, and where the sinister surrealism of "Brazil" sits among the quiet suburbs of "Trumpton". The accoutrements of the central figure - the Boy Driver - mini-tv, camcorder, portable stereo and paperback books - are paralleled by the hardware and software deployed in the making of the piece: video footage shot on VHS, low- and high-band Dmatic, Hi8mm and BetacamSP; computer graphics realised by Quantel Paintbox, Spaceward Matisse and Wavefront; sound samplers and digital storage systems. One of the main sources of interest of Work Rest and Play is that it is a technical palimpsest for our times, a catalogue of contemporary hardware and software which, if we are not already aware of it, we rapidly ought to be.

Scotland has been very fortunate in producing figures trained in fine art who are, in addition, highly proficient with words. Alasdair Gray and John Byrne spring to mind, and the verbal dimensions of Work Rest and Play evoke the same kind of pleasure. Work Rest and Play has a verbally rich and witty commentary and is interspersed with equally witty spoof adverts and recurrent transmissions from a radio station, Radio Passton. The TV adverts have a kind of crazed Texas Tom figure, played by TV comedian Bruce Morton, who invites us to consume all manner of electronic goods at GeeBees. The metaphor, Great Britain as one ramshackle, electronically consumerist nightmare, is worn lightly.



GeeBees Man

Work Rest and Play also has some sense of cinematic history in that it trawls the cinematic past for its metaphors. There are references to Martin Scorsese's 'Mean Streets' (1973) and the British film 'Get Carter' (1971) and the Albert Finney character of 'Saturday Night and Sunday Morning' (1960) is mobilized as a culture hero who will go on throwing stones at the middle-class bungalows littering the landscape of contemporary Britain.

Since their work is image-led rather than conceived in literary terms, the makers have already found it hard going in Scotland. It has reached its impressive state through the dedication of its makers and the goodwill of their collaborators, certain independent production companies, facilities houses and educational institutions.

by Colin McArthur



The Voice of Reason

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GEORGE SQUARED (1919-1990)

Hey FRANK!

Are you out there?
Are you listening?



Tender Comrades

A note on Light, Sound and Motion

Work Rest and Play is an example of what can be achieved when biting urban prose and a cultivated bad attitude fuse together with street technologies such as the camcorder, before colliding in the edit suite with the kind of digital tools that are normally reserved for fine tuning adverts and music clips.

The result, in the case of this particular techno-pile up, is not a car commercial (or dog food ad come to think of it) but a customised low budget road movie.

A form of hit and run film making and electronic cinema that draws inspiration from a culture that is informed by (cyber)punk, digital sampling, desktop publishing, soul, reggae and street music, computer games and the kind of buzzing urban prose that is instantly identifiable with post-industrial Scotland.

In short, all those aspects of a "fuck you" urban culture that many people (who should know better) may simply see as being negative, politically suspect or politically incorrect.

To simply dismiss Work Rest and Play as a road movie with a Pentium chip on its shoulder is missing the point. Tune in, turn it up and enjoy it, and you'll discover a story of transition, a rite of passage and a commentary on the kind of ideas, dreams and attitudes that the eighties and early nineties have both created and destroyed.

More of a joy-ride through a surreal, shifting, emotional and technological landscape than a lonesome muse on life 'On the Road', Work Rest and Play is as much about running on the spot as it is about running out of places to go.

It is a portrait of a world where the moment becomes all that matters and a fragment becomes more important than a whole story ever will.

As we fast approach the millenium, perhaps our brave new wired world really isn't going to be the great information highway that Apple and IBM want us to believe in after all, but one big decaying housing estate instead.

A Fucked-up global ghetto and true "Joy-rider's dream".

Doug Aubrey

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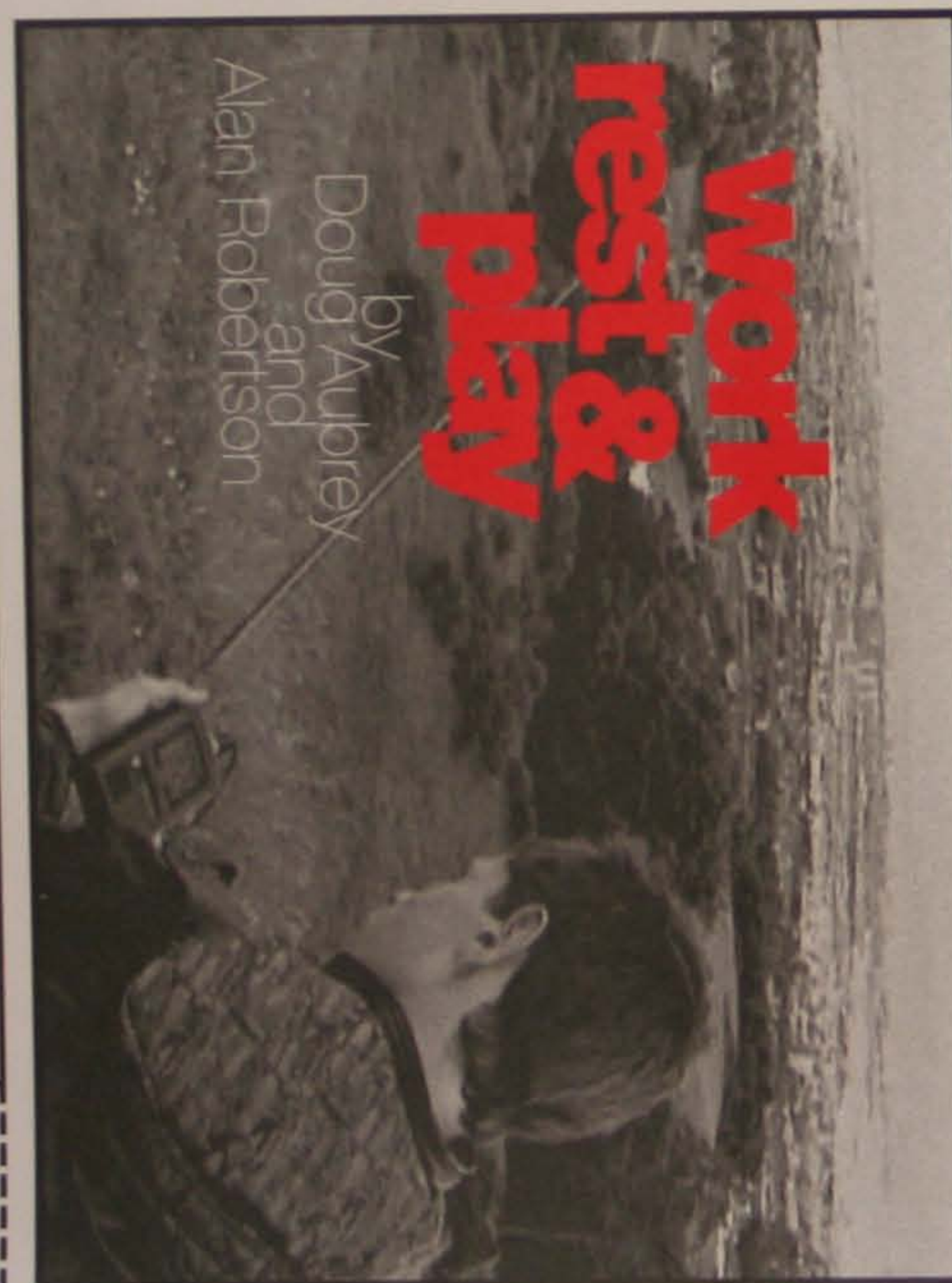
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EPISODE GUIDE

THE LIGHT SIDE

Light, Sound, Motion and a guy named Frank
Good Times, Bad Times, Propaganda and a Swiss Army Knife

Love, Lead and Pre-cast Concrete

Running Time: 65 minutes

THE DARK SIDE

Iron, Steel and Paper - Blood, Sweat and Lager
Dreams, Light and the darkness on the edge of town

Running Time: 45 minutes

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