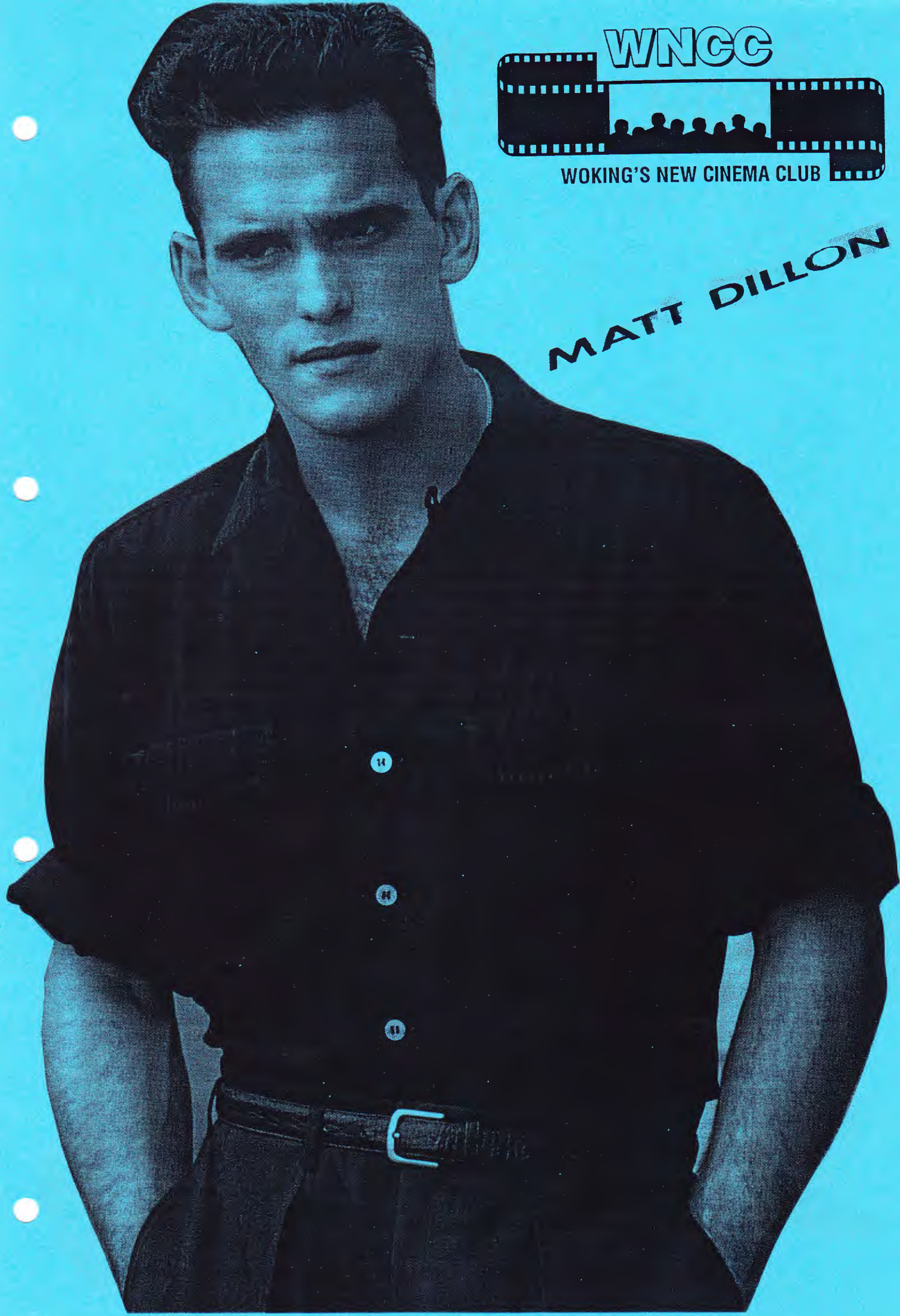




WOKING'S NEW CINEMA CLUB

MATT DILLON



A COUPLE OF ACES FROM THE MATT PACK

Hollywood loves labels. From actors, directors and writers through to cinematography and genre, it all has to be Pigeon-holed. Matt Dillon has had his fare share of tags in his time and, even in our publicity for today's Double Bill, we billed "Drugstore Cowboy" and "Singles" as his "Coming of Age" movies. This to me, is either offering Dillon a reason for making a strange career move or patronising his earlier work and putting it all into a "Teen Movie" closet. That closet has some excellent films in it which, alongside today's choice, make this actor's Curriculum Vitae worth a closer inspection.

Born in 1964, Matt Dillon made his first film when just fourteen, appearing in Jonathan Kaplan's acclaimed "Over The Edge". The idea of fourteen year old rebels terrorising a local community with guns, taking drugs and boozing themselves senseless may fit more comfortably in today's cinema schedules, but it was given a wide-birth and a limited showing in 1979.

Of his early work, it is a pair of films Dillon made for Francis Ford Coppola that gained him the most critical acclaim and really set his career rolling. He had already appeared in "Tex", based on a best selling novel by S.E. Hinton, when Coppola began casting for "The Outsiders" adapted from a book by the same author. Hinton encouraged Coppola to cast Dillon in the demanding role of Dallas, a brooding gang leader. He was superb in the part, dazzling alongside many of his contemporaries (Rob Lowe, Tom Cruise, C. Thomas Howell, Patrick Swayze, Emilio Estevez) in what was to become perhaps the definitive Brat Pack Movie.

The same year, 1983, Dillon worked with Coppola again in yet another adaption of a Hinton novel. This time it was "Rumble Fish", starring Mickey Rourke, a stylish black and white melodrama, which gained cult status very quickly and won Matt Dillon an award in Italy. He was also voted Most Popular Foreign Actor by two of Japan's top magazines.

"Rumble Fish" was a very moody film. Dealing with a young man living in the shadow of his older brother, many found it depressing and inaccessible, while others claimed it was a masterpiece. What Dillon needed to do now to consolidate his position, was to widen his appeal and gain a major commercial success. A switch from heavy drama to comedy seemed to do the trick.

"The Flamingo Kid" in 1984 is one of Matt Dillon's most popular films. A dream vehicle for the star, it is set in 1963, with Dillon as a Brooklyn kid from a working class family who gets a job at a local beach club. There he samples the high life.

As a comedian, Dillon was an unknown quantity. Garry Marshall, who directed "The Flamingo Kid" said at the time:

"Matt has a mystery to me. You never know what he is going to do next. And, in comedy, the element of surprise is very important. Even though he had only done primarily heavy things before, it turned out that he was a perfect light comedian".

And, according to the producer of the film, Michael Phillips, there was never any doubt who they wanted in the lead role. He said that Dillon had a great deal more charisma than other actors in his age group and "a compelling screen presence".

That screen presence put him alongside Gene Hackman the following year in "Target", a romping lightweight thriller. The same year, he appeared in an Australian film, "Rebel" in which he played an American GI, AWOL. It is a curious film, attempting to be very stylish it mixes musical sequences with the drama, rather slowing the pace. Leonard Maltin describes Dillon as "totally miscast".

After a fairly lean patch in the mid-to-late Eighties (some television movies include a voice over on "Dear America", an acclaimed account of Vietnam but also "Kansas", which Maltin lists as a "Bomb" and a real "dog"), Dillon found himself with Gus Van Saint and "Drugstore Cowboy".

After "Drugstore", it was two years before he returned to the big screen. This time in James Dearden's marvellous "A Kiss Before Dying", a remake of the 1956 classic. Dillon is compelling in the lead - chilling, very convincing.

"Singles" was a suprise for Dillon fans. It shows his versatility but it is by no means "his film". It is much more an ensemble piece. It will be interesting to see how he fares with his fans and his critics in his most recent film, "Mr Wonderful" released last month.

So, what label shall we give Matt Dillon? He has been described as the next James Dean or the new Marlon Brando. Well, James Dean made very few films and died before he could get old and Marlon Brando got old before he could make more of the films his following likes to remember him for. He may scowl a bit like these two legends, but beyond that Matt Dillon is his own kind of rebel.

IAN BRESMAN



DRUGSTORE COWBOY.

1989. Directed by Gus Van Saint.

Starring: Matt Dillon, Kelly Lynch, James Remar, Heather Graham and William S. Burroughs.

Empire magazine described this as Matt Dillon's first "adult role", although it is uncertain whether they mean the age of the character he is playing or the subject matter!

Based on an unpublished book by James Fogle, serving time in the States for drug-related-offences, the film follows a band of junkies in the Seventies who raid the local chemists for a fix. Dillon plays Bob, the leader of the group and the film tries to explore the reasons why people take drugs for enjoyment.

At the time of its release, "Drugstore Cowboy" was deemed controversial and Matt Dillon's presence in the film many found quite alarming. Of course, this helped in two respects: it gave the picture more impact and also had a positive effect on the box office.

SINGLES

1992. Directed by Cameron Crowe.

Starring: Matt Dillon, Bridget Fonda and Campbell Scott.

It could be that this is the first film in which Matt Dillon wears a wig! Empire describes it as a "cascading, unkempt grunge-wig", so who can argue with that.

Set firmly in the Nineties, written and directed by Cameron Crowe, "Singles" leads us to a complex of single appartments where a series of laid back individuals drift in and out of their rooms and each others lives.

Matt Dillon plays a long-haired guitarist fronting a curiously named band, while Bridget Fonda is the girl obsessed with him. A host of other young stars portray a mismatch of youth either in love or searching for it.

Charming and witty, "Singles" has some moments to savour and, although an American film about youth, it steers well clear of the subject covered in the first of tonight's films.

**COMING
NEXT
MONTH**

Goldwater
ON
Lodge **BIGSCREEN**

TUESDAY 7 DECEMBER FOR 1 DAY ONLY AT 8:00 pm
PERFORMANCE ENDS 10.30 p.m.



Dresser, The
(Peter Yates, 1983, GB) Albert Finney, Tom Courtenay, Edward Fox, Zena Walker, Eileen Atkins, Michael Gough.
118 min. PG

An accomplished film of Ronald Harwood's theatrical two-hander, animated by two gigantic performances. Finney, grossly Shakespearean as Sir, the imperious, declamatory actor-manager with a Moses-like command of his company and inanimate objects ('St-o-o-p th-a-a-a-t tra-i-a-i-n!' he bawls, bringing British rail to its knees), is fully matched by Courtenay's pantomime poof Norman, Sir's devoted dresser: mincing, nagging, but the only one able to reach to the furthest depths of Sir's hair-tearing madness and coax him into the costumes and roles that have by wicked irony destroyed him. Especially pleasing, then, that in the final act it is the quiet craft of an actress — Atkins as the long-suffering, love-lorn stage manageress — that rises above constrictions of plot and thankless part to upstage them.
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