

Dogs: a house and a band

Dogs in Space ★★★
Princess Theatre
November 10-12

review by Dragos Ruiu

Dogs in Space is about a house, and a band. The house is best described as the Taj Mah Hole or maybe Disgraceland. It's a huge old rickety house in a seedy part of Melbourne. The band that lives there is called Dogs in Space, and they play music, err... sort of, that is euphemistically described as heavily alternative.

This house is the kind of place that attracts anyone that doesn't have a niche

There are the gothic, black and white power-dykes...

in society. People sleep in any corner they can find; food and clean dishes are a lot harder to find than drugs and sex.

It is a house full of unique people, all slowly eroding. They exist in an endless summer of parties, alcohol, drugs and late night munchie trips to the Seven-Eleven.

This movie is a faithful characterization of the alternative music scene as it existed in the early eighties. For most people it is a trip to a bizarre, scary world, and for some it will be a visit to a place they remember. The characters in this movie can be hauntingly familiar at times.

There are the gothic, black and white power-dykes, the tragically-hip school-girl trying to fit in just to show that she is

cool, the shy, insecure smart guy who happens to like drugs, the engineering student desperately trying to build the willpower to avoid the party and study. These middle-class misfits don't all like each other, but when in trouble they will defend each other like family — because they have no other friends.

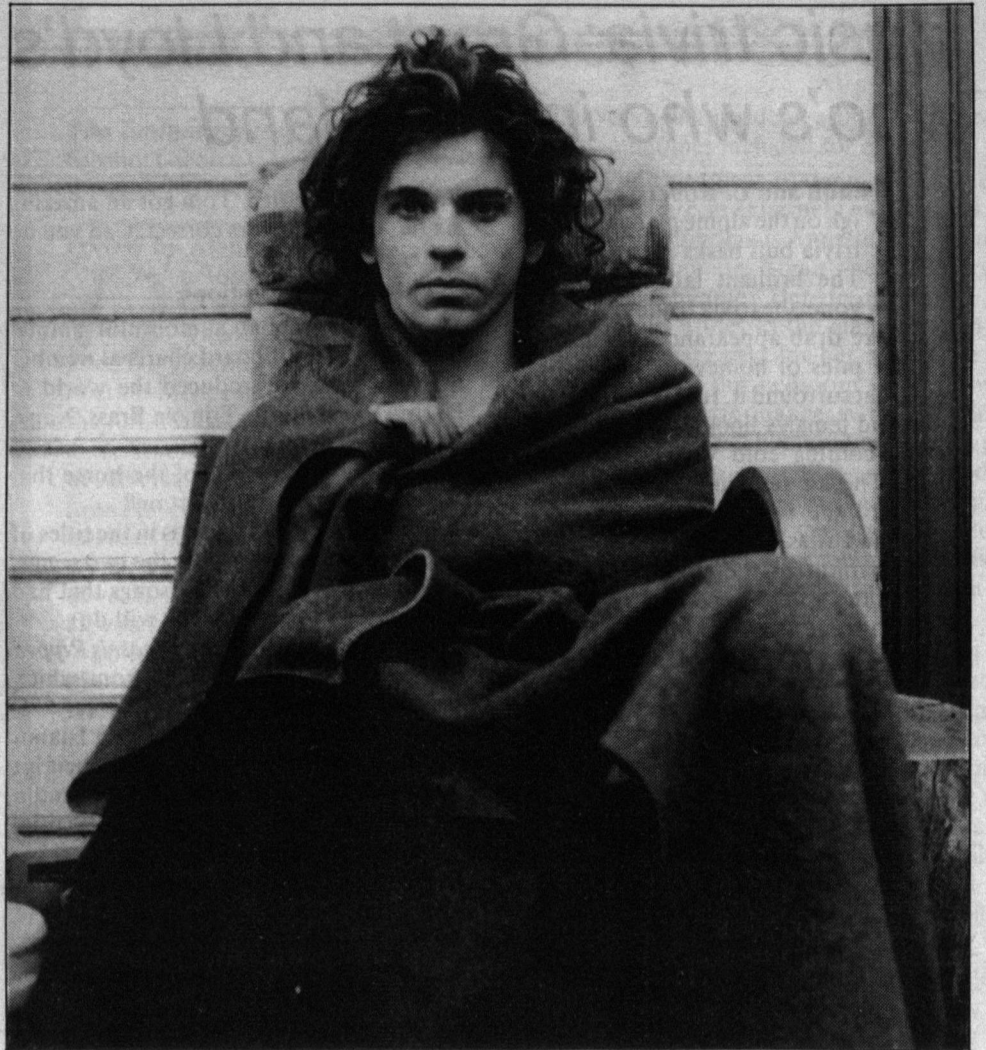
They all faithfully dress up in their best nouveau-scare fashions to go to the gigs at the nearby alternative club — a dingy smoke filled room with a closet that serves beer. At the front there are the requisite alternative band musicians, beating on instruments they can't play and screaming about suicide.

In the midst of all this intense scenery, the plot of the movie revolves around a love story. Sam, the lead singer of Dogs in Space, is madly in love with Anna (Saskia Post). Sam, who is played by Michael Hutchence (the real life lead singer of INXS), is a very different(!) person.

Sam spends most of the movie crawling around in a blanket. It doesn't matter that he happens to be in a lineup for Bowie tickets; he is still crawling around in a blanket. While his friends wonder if he has coherent thoughts, the audience is shown a different side of Sam. He is a sensitive person, deeply in love with Anna. Sam has a problem though, he does heroin, and soon Anna does too.

As *Dogs in Space* progresses, we see the lives of these very unique people degenerate through the drugs they take. Parallels between this movie and others of its genre, like *Suburbia* and *Sid and Nancy* are crying to be made. They all deal with a world few people see, treating the audience to scenes of morbid voyeurism.

Difficult portrayals are handled adeptly, with quick editing and unusual camera angles. The soundtrack plays it safe for the sake of a straighter-laced audience, thus



Michael Hutchence, lead singer of the Australian band INXS, plays a would be rocker addicted to heroin in *Dogs in Space*. The blanket is a substitute for clothing.

falling short of excellence.

The whole thing has an unusual style, due partly to the video editing and partly to the cinema verite feel it imparts. Richard Lowenstein, who has directed several INXS and Hunters and Collectors videos, both wrote and directed this movie. The impression he gives is that he has lived through the situation depicted. Lending credence to this theory is the fact that several

characters portrayed themselves.

All in all, *Dogs in Space* is an interesting movie which presents some very strong messages. It is full of touching moments, poignant comedy, and memorable scenes which will give you pause for thought. I encourage anyone who can appreciate the unusual to go see it, but remember Cocktail it ain't (ostensibly a good thing).

... incredible cinematography... great soundtrack... matches anything that (Warren) Miller has cranked out in 30 years.

Daryl Slade, *Calgary Herald*

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