

Subtle comedy of heart and beauty

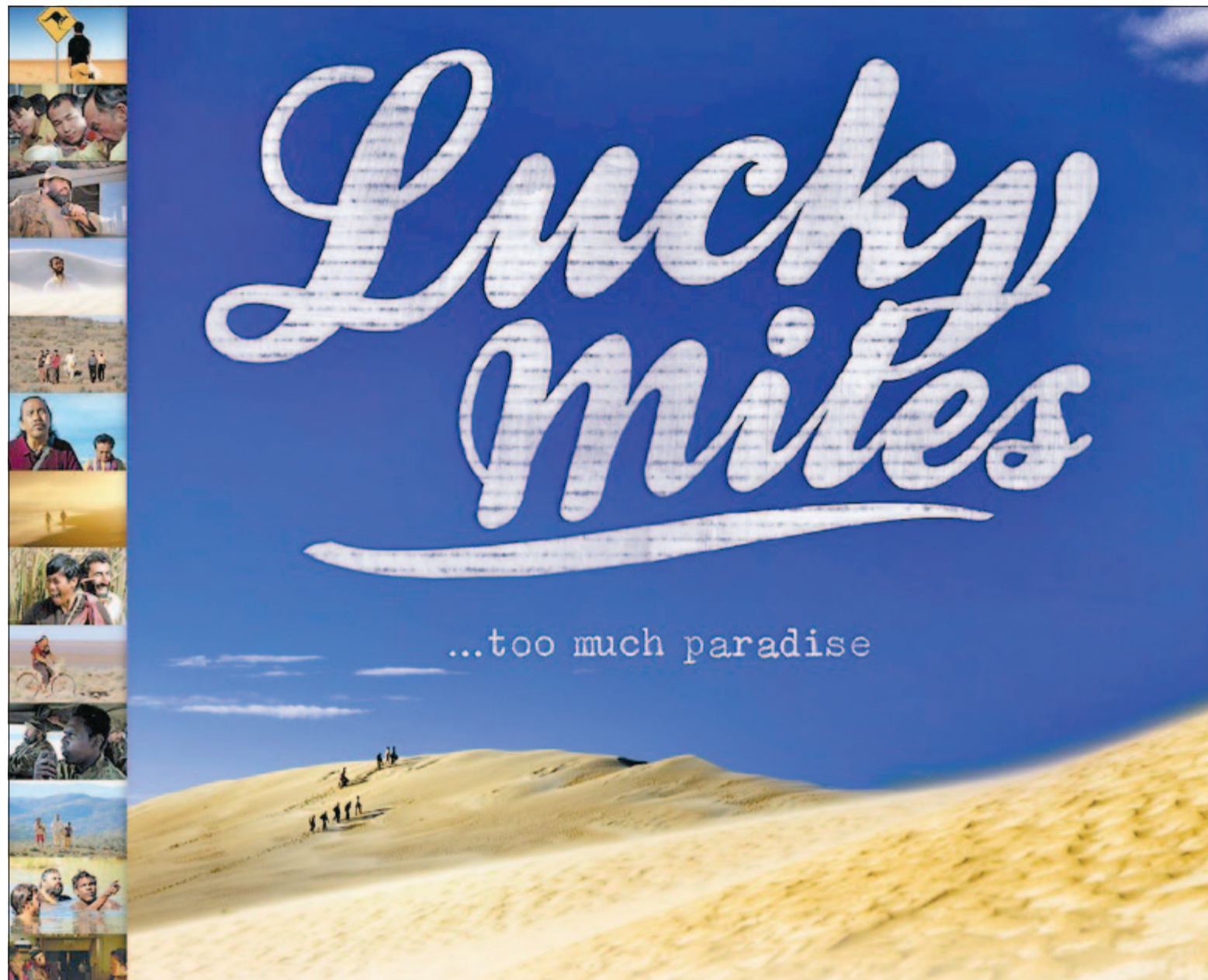
DVD Review: *Lucky Miles*
Mitchell Jordan

On a remote beach 1200km from Perth, 12 men from Singapore arrive by boat expecting a bus to be waiting for them.

It's an absurd situation and one that most of us could never imagine being in. From this moment on, director Michael James Rowland begins his breathtaking and often humorous journey not only through the vast Australian landscape, but also into the heart of what it is to be human.

Most of the men are taken away by police almost immediately after their first contact with Australians. Following this, the film largely concentrates on three boat people - Arun (Kenneth Moraleda), a naive man devoted to finding his father in Perth; Youssif (Rodney Aff), an engineer with a short temper and the slimy Ramelan (Srisaied Saedpraseuth), who was responsible for bringing the men to Australia.

Contrasting their journey and survival tactics to that of the bumbling authorities tracking them down, Mr Rowland cleverly shows humans' ability to adapt in the strangest and most testing of circumstances. Though it's been dubbed a comedy, the humour in *Lucky Miles* is far more subtle. While it might be funny to watch three men navigate a rusted car



through the desert, placing a rock over the break when they wish to stop, there's also something simultaneously tragic and moving about these moments.

Placing viewers in the position of an outsider is what makes this film so successful and so affecting. Journeying through an arid desert where the sun stings like a snakebite and goannas take on demonic proportions, this is a vivid and staggering look at how powerful and unrelenting Australia's geography is, and how powerless humans are against it.

Ultimately, the film belongs to Arun, who is the real hero and most likely to earn the audiences' affection. The closing scene is the real clincher and lingers long after the end credits. Extras, such as deleted scenes and the making of and background to *Lucky Miles*, all work to enhance what is probably the most inspiring film of 2007.

Winner of the Audience Award for Best Feature at the Sydney Film Festival 2007, *Lucky Miles* will be released on DVD on December 5 as a two disc set with a choice of languages - English, Khmer, Gumatj, French, Arabic, Indonesian and English subtitles.

Lucky Miles...A comedy with heart and a breathtaking journey through the vast Australian landscape.



Ancient Pompeii relics heading to Melbourne



A gold bracelet, weighing over half a kilogram and found on a victim in Pompeii, was part of a travelling exhibition in America of Pompeii. Pompeii and the nearby communities of Heraculaneum, Oplontis, Boscoreale and Terzigno were destroyed by the eruption of Mt Vesuvius in 79AD.

The haunting figures of two women covering in the path of a volcanic eruption almost 2000 years ago will form the centrepiece of a Melbourne exhibition on Pompeii.

The women were among about 20,000 people killed in 79AD when Mt Vesuvius erupted, burying the ancient Italian city of Pompeii in lava and ash.

The city's remains were only unearthed in the early 1700s and have since become a major tourist attraction.

Australians will soon be able to share in the fascinating story thanks to a partnership between the Melbourne Museum and Italian archaeological authorities.

Launching a sneak preview of *A Day in Pompeii*, Victorian Premier John Brumby said the exhibition was a major coup for the state.

"The story of the ancient city of Pompeii is one that continues to intrigue and fascinate people of all ages," he said.

"Pompeii was encased under many metres of ash and pumice, and was lost for nearly 17 centuries before its rediscovery...What the exhibition does is provide an

extraordinary insight into the life of a city at the height of the Roman Empire."

Australia's first Pompeii exhibition will open in June 2009 and feature more than 250 artefacts.

Among the most stirring are the body casts of two women, whose figures were preserved in hardened ash where they fell in the garden of the House of Cryptoporticus.

Museum Victoria Chief Executive Patrick Greene said the exhibition would give visitors the experience of being in Pompeii on the "fateful day, August 24th 79AD".

"This will be the most complete, the most dramatic, the most evocative exhibition ever staged on the subject of Pompeii," he said.

"While many residents escaped, others lost their lives and their haunting body casts will undoubtedly connect visitors on a deeply emotional level to the people who lived in Pompeii."

The exhibition will run from June 26 to October 11, 2009 as part of the *Melbourne Winter Masterpieces* series.

AAP

Missing masterpiece on sale



Shortly after it was painted in 1837, *Bamborough Castle* by British master artist JMW Turner was described by the Graphic Society as "one of the finest watercolour drawings in the world". The masterpiece has not been seen in public for 118 years and had been listed as lost. Now found, it goes up for auction on December 5 with a price tag in excess of \$A5.8 million.

Creative wonders in Currumbin

Far from the common festival lands of open paddocks and dust bowl stadiums, **Kieran Burke** entered a festival "wonderland" in the Gold Coast's Le Esprit gardens and now there is no turning back.

Review: *Wonderland art and music festival*

I have had a love-hate relationship with Queensland's Gold Coast for the past five years. As my residence of choice, I am seduced by the sun, the surf and the lifestyle, but am often torn between standing up for or agreeing that this region is just a cultural wasteland with limited outlets to showcase its true talent. However, the Wonderland art and music festival at Currumbin Valley's Le Esprit bird gardens on Sunday November 25 reinstated my faith that the Gold Coast is full of like-minded individuals trying to break down the stigma of "white shoes and gold chains".

It was billed as "eclectic and underground" - 50 bands, 5 stages, art installations, exhibitions, markets and good food - but it was the setting that made the experience so beautiful. Embarrassed that it has taken me

five years to find such a beautiful setting on the Gold Coast, Le Esprit gardens are a labyrinth of natives and lush tropical greenery, grassy knolls and man-made hedge mazes. Pieces of art hung from giant trees with branches and leaves serving as sun barriers, photographic exhibitions adorned the majority of the bases of trees and makeshift art galleries showcased the local talents' canvasses. Graffiti artists covered large open-air pieces all with the backdrop of competing sounds of different genres of music. Unlike other music festivals in open paddocks and dust bowl stadiums, Wonderland's surroundings added a feeling of tranquillity and friendliness.

Local acts The Whinnie Coopers and Roger set off revellers into a bouncing frenzy, while the contrasting younger genius and instrumental work of The Gingers was performed. Dallas



Photos by Kieran Burke



Currumbin creativity... open air art displays hang at Le Esprit gardens at the Wonderland art and music festival.

Frasca sung power ballads and her "gentlemen", backed up with metal guitars and distorted noises, provided an interactive experience for the audience. Local artist and musician Skotty Fairclough whipped up soulful one-man numbers while keeping beat with a foot tambourine.

In an instant, you could go from rock to indie, folk to bongsos and then end up listening to a mish-mash of dub, downbeat, house and jazz. But the night belonged to Julia Stone, one half of a duo with her brother Angus. She mesmerised all with her unique vocals and cuteness. Each song was accompanied by a close friend who would

add vocals or play the harmonica or cello. Simply beautiful.

I'm still undecided if it was the music or the art that reigned supreme on the day. One thing is for sure, seeing a collection of like-minded individuals pushing the creative boundaries of such a stigmatised region made for an inspiring sight. If this year's increased popularity compared to that of last year is any indication, we may have a solid annual gig that will become a main player in South-East Queensland. Is this the start of the Gold Coast splendour in the grass? Only time will tell, but my fingers are crossed. Onward and upward...

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