

## Favela Rising

★★★★★

**Dirs Jeff Zimbalist, Matt Mochary** US (no cert) 80 mins, ICA

This arresting documentary tells of the rise of AfroReggae, a socially conscious Brazilian band born of violence and drug-running in the Rio favela of Vigário Geral in the early '90s. Anderson Sa, the band's founder and the focus of this film, dreamt of being 'a revolutionary druglord' when he was a kid, which speaks volumes about his neighbourhood. As this fast-paced but well-informed film tells us, 3,937 minors died as a result of violence in the city between 1987 and 2001, and the directors of 'Favela Rising' give us a taster of the situation by presenting ample TV footage of bodies, blood baths, drug stashes and firearms (usually an ugly combination of all four). But music and performance take centre-stage too, and Anderson himself offers a story of

hope; a former drug dealer, he's now a community leader and a local icon.

Both Anderson and this film pin the rapid rise of AfroReggae – now as much a social movement and a local education project as a music group – to one particular event that took place in Vigário Geral in August 1993: the murder of four policemen by drug dealers, which in turn prompted the police to enter the favela and 'massacre' 21 inhabitants. The 'Grupo AfroReggae' began to publish a radical local newspaper, *AfroReggae News*, and the lyrics of its band – now signed to Universal Music – dealt directly with the community's history and problems. 'What do you want to be when you grow up?' Anderson asks one local kid. 'An outlaw,' the boy replies. 'Favela Rising' credits art with changing lives (it cites a dramatic drop in drug crime in Vigário Geral), but doesn't lose sight of its limitations either. *Dave Calhoun*



Slum sounds 'Favela Rising'

## Two for the Money

★★★★★

**Dir D J Caruso** US (15) 122 mins, Londonwide, see listings

Does Al Pacino turn down interesting job offers in favour of this sort of Hollywood fare that allows him to phone-in another heavy-eyed, shouty 'Pacino' performance? Here, he plays Walter Abrams, a New York sports-betting magnate who thrives off the cut-and-thrust of his questionable business while struggling to keep at bay his addictive leanings and a threat of heart failure. A paternal instinct (a strange theme, unexplained) drives him to hire Brandon Lang (Matthew McConaughey), an injured American footballer who Abrams plucks from a Vegas call-centre to become his star employee. Together, they host a TV show and, for a while, the money rolls in...

This corruption of the sporting dream is confused and uninspiring. Clearly the hope was that the character of Abrams would win through, but the sub-'Glengarry Glen Ross' dialogue comes across like it's been written for a Pacino-for-hire performance: 'You're small, Jerry,' shouts Walter. 'You belong in a can.' The film's morality is skewed too. How can we feel sorry for a gambling victim and for Abrams? Pacino, we deserve better! *Dave Calhoun*

## The Road to Guantánamo

★★★★★

**Dirs Michael Winterbottom, Mat Whitecross** GB (tbc) 95 mins, Central

Impossible to fault Winterbottom and Whitecross's motives in questioning the thinking behind and disciplinary regime of the US anti-terror camp – unless you're a diehard Bush-baby (even then you may have qualms about the Administration's attitude to international law). But a few flaws undermine the moral, political and dramatic force of the filmmakers' 'argument' as they trace the trajectory of the 'Tipton Three' from the Midlands, via Pakistan and Afghanistan, to isolation, torture and misery in the camp. The film is predicated on a wholly unquestioning acceptance of the men's own account of why they were in Afghanistan and what befell them. The linear structure – which, for all the mix of straight-to-camera reminiscence, reconstruction and newsreel, amounts to an 'and then, and then, and then...' narrative – precludes illuminating digression and eventually makes for a degree of dramatic tedium. Finally, the docudrama scenes feel no more authentic than those in any stylish current affairs exposé. Still, the Three's determination to move on is very affecting. *Geoff Andrew*

## The Ketchup Effect

★★★★★

**Dir Teresa Fabik** Swe/Fin (15) 90 mins, Odeon Wardour St



'The Ketchup Effect'

Twelve-year-old Sofie (Amanda Renberg) can't wait to start high school, gushing to her best friends about class hottie Mouse, who duly invites her to a party. The style is televisual, the pop soundtrack dodgy; so far, so Swedish 'Hollyoaks'. What follows, however, is a scene of impressively controlled discomfort that marks 'The Ketchup Effect' as more than teen fluff: at the party, a drunken Sofie passes out and is leeringly photographed in compromising positions by Mouse and his cohorts; her name is soon mud, her friends back off, her teacher dad is unimpressed, and things go from bad to worse... The film's aesthetic might be unremarkable and its plotting as prone to contrived histrionics as its characters, but writer-director Teresa Fabik shows an acute eye for the myriad daily mortifications of adolescence, and the brutally Darwinian dynamics of the school ecosystem – far more plausibly presented here than in the average US high school flick. Renberg, rarely off-screen, also manages to convey self-centred teenage angst without alienating us; her rebuttal of her naive form tutor's inane attempts at consolation is a particular treat. *Ben Walters*

## The Hills Have Eyes

★★★★★

**Dir Alexandre Aja** US (18) 107 mins, Londonwide, see listings

This modern-day remake of horror classic 'The Hills Have Eyes' kicks off with a brief but brutal pre-title massacre that will have gore-hounds licking their lips in anticipation. Unfortunately, director Alexandre Aja appears to have shot his bloody load during this early sequence, as the rest of the film fails to live up to such early promise. In fact, if you've seen Wes Craven's 1972 original, it's probably best to skip the next 45 minutes as it's practically a scene-for-scene retread involving a squabbling family, a cross-country trip, a wrong turn and a band of mutant cannibals hungry for flesh. The second half of the flick features a few detours, including a little more motive and back story involving the creation of the ultimate nuclear family. Yet while the screenplay is tight, the performances solid and the direction superior to many of the horror reconstructions churned out in recent months, one can't help thinking that 'The Hills Have Eyes' is a rather pointless exercise that reinforces the age-old adage 'If it ain't broke, don't remake it'. *Chris Tilly*

## These Foolish Things

★★★★★

**Dir Julia Taylor-Stanley** GB (12A) 104 mins, Central, see listings



'These Foolish Things'

This appalling Merchant Ivory-lite romance about an aspiring young actress in '30s London comes across like 'Bullets over Broadway' for the ITV2 generation. The main problem is that when the film lurches into one of its many narrative cul-de-sacs, writer/director Taylor-Stanley simply adds more characters, never allowing enough time to acquire emotional inroads with any of them.

The sloppy period design consists of a bunch of jazz-handing extras with cigarette holders stuck in their mouths while the studied '30s mannerisms feel like they've been cut and pasted straight from Wikipedia.

An ill-matched cast sees television drama ex-pats trade naff one-liners with the likes of Lauren Bacall, Joss Ackland and Anjelica Huston, whose appearance adds little pedigree to what amounts to a monotonous chain of formulaic romantic clichés. And the less said of Terence Stamp's horrifying impersonation of John Gielgud's silver-tongued valet in 'Arthur' the better. *David Jenkins*

## Evil Aliens

★★★★★

**Dir Jake West** UK (18) 89 mins, Odeon Wardour St

As 'Mysterious Skin' showed last year, the tropes of '90s-style alien-abduction mythology can still be put to good use. This tongue-in-cheek, no-budget splatterfest, however, feels like too little too late – too little suspense or wit, at least, as it has no shortage of crass stereotypes, bodily fluids or triple-breasted interstellar stunnas. The off-the-peg plot dispatches the cynical crew of tawdry satellite show 'Weird World', plus a geeky alien enthusiast, to a remote Welsh island where a member of the sole, inbred family claims to have been impregnated by ETs. Ley lines and crop circles get a mention, but the focus is on vigorous anal probes and cattle mutilation undertaken by invaders who make vintage 'Dr Who' monsters seem like the height of prosthetic sophistication. Such crudeness nixes any chance of genuine menace, or even the gleeful spite of the marauders in 'Mars Attacks!'. Barring a couple of nice nods to Jerry Springer and, er, The Wurzels, script, performances and direction are resolutely banal and exploitative, relying on a splash of cum here, a crucified crow there. *Ben Walters*

## What where

How to use the

The films listed are on their first Central Cinema sections which venues, please Abbreviations Central – cine End/Soho are within Zone 2 within the M2. For a full list of listings, please index at front. \* Denotes a recommendation. **NEW** – Films Preview section. **Film Critical** – ages: PG – 12A – children admitted only person of 18 under age 18

**Aeon Flux** (12A) *Charlize Theron* 93 mins. A decent sci-fi conspiracy plot, but the studied '30s mannerisms feel like they've been cut and pasted straight from Wikipedia. *David Jenkins*

**The Beat** (12A) *Green* 95 mins. A decent sci-fi conspiracy plot, but the studied '30s mannerisms feel like they've been cut and pasted straight from Wikipedia. *David Jenkins*

**Big Momma** (PG) *Mike Myers* 95 mins. A decent sci-fi conspiracy plot, but the studied '30s mannerisms feel like they've been cut and pasted straight from Wikipedia. *David Jenkins*

**Evil Aliens** (18) *Jake West* 89 mins. A decent sci-fi conspiracy plot, but the studied '30s mannerisms feel like they've been cut and pasted straight from Wikipedia. *David Jenkins*

**The Hills Have Eyes** (18) *Alexandre Aja* 107 mins. A decent sci-fi conspiracy plot, but the studied '30s mannerisms feel like they've been cut and pasted straight from Wikipedia. *David Jenkins*

**Two for the Money** (15) *D J Caruso* 122 mins. A decent sci-fi conspiracy plot, but the studied '30s mannerisms feel like they've been cut and pasted straight from Wikipedia. *David Jenkins*

**The Road to Guantánamo** (tbc) *Michael Winterbottom, Mat Whitecross* 95 mins. A decent sci-fi conspiracy plot, but the studied '30s mannerisms feel like they've been cut and pasted straight from Wikipedia. *David Jenkins*

**Favela Rising** (no cert) *Jeff Zimbalist, Matt Mochary* 80 mins. A decent sci-fi conspiracy plot, but the studied '30s mannerisms feel like they've been cut and pasted straight from Wikipedia. *David Jenkins*