

## Films examine men of Texas

Struggle of vanishing cowboy depicted

film

"Last Night at the Alamo"  
"Heart Full of Soul"



By Mark Baldridge  
Staff Reporter

The "men's movement," that burgeoning social phenomenon, is an attempt by men to find out what it means to be male in our society. One of its basic tenets is the claim that there are no rituals for modern adolescents, no initiations into manhood. Men in our culture are therefore left with improper models of masculinity.

The films of Eagle Pennell examine the lives and ideals of men in Texas, land of the longhorn and the six shooter. Modern Texans experience, in an intensified form, the myth of the American Male — independent, sexually inexhaustible, invulner-

able — and its conflict with modern sensibilities. What happens when there is no more room for cowboys?

These films are showing this weekend at the Ross Film Theater. Tonight's offering is "Last Night at the Alamo."

Photographed in grainy black and white, "Alamo" is a quirky vision of the vanishing cowboy. The action takes place on a single evening in a seedy Houston bar set to be demolished the next morning. The characters are eccentric, maladjusted and hilarious. Pennell, a Texan himself, draws them with clarity and sympathy, but without a trace of sentimentality. They are true to life, to the extent that anything in Texas can be, and they never fail to be entertainingly human.

The soundtrack is a little muddy, the editing slips somewhat, but the cinematography is often beautiful and the story is always engaging.

Saturday's showing is "Heart Full of Soul," also by Pennell. In the same black and white, it's the story of an embittered journalist and his relationships with men, particularly his older brother. While the film lacks some of the clarity and continuity of "Alamo," its characters, if anything, are quirrier, more hilarious. Forgo the plot, and just watch.

Bear in mind that these are men's movies. They are about men. But other genders may find the struggles of these particular men illuminating. They will almost certainly find them fun.

Eagle Pennell, writer and director of the films currently showing at the Mary Riepma Ross Film Theater, will be speaking after the showing of his film "Heart Full of Soul" at 7:30 Saturday night.

Pennell, a native of Texas, has made a splash in the world of independent filmmaking with his off-beat character studies. "Last Night

at the Alamo" and "Heart Full of Soul" are playing this weekend.

Critics have heralded these black-and-white films as possessing some of the best stylistic elements of the Midwestern low-budget film.

Pennell will answer questions about his movies and independent filmmaking. Viewers are encouraged to remain for the event.



Courtesy of the Ross Film Theater  
Filmmaker Eagle Pennell will speak following the screening of his movie "Heart Full of Soul" 7:30 p.m. Saturday night at the Ross Film Theater.

## Animated film apocalyptic

film

"Akira"



By Jeffrey Frey  
Staff Reporter

It is the year 2019, 31 years after World War III, and Neo-Tokyo is about to explode.

A cyber-punk gang of bikers stumbles across a government plot to infuse children with destructive, telekinetic powers in an apocalyptic fantasy hailed as the most impressive animation to appear since "Fantasia."

"Akira," a Japanese feature-length film, will show at the Mary Riepma Ross Film Theater on Sept. 29.

Based on the widely popular comic book saga of the same name, "Akira" is state-of-the-art animation drenched in high-tech design and beautiful, radiating colors and graphics.

Directed by the comic book's author, Katsuhiro Otomo, "Akira" is the most expensive animated feature ever made, taking its name from a mysterious force that may be afoot in Neo-Tokyo, where the action takes place.

Amidst this post-war environment are the norms of a stable culture: high-school students, motorcycle gangs, corrupt government officials and mystics predicting doom. Although its plot is complicated, this post-holocaust tale is well-developed.

Obsessed with pop culture, Otomo and his staff of talented animators conjure up wild and turbulent special effects, a nice departure from the gaudiness of standard animation.

Because of its brilliant color and design and explicit violence, "Akira" has been compared to such films as "Blade Runner," "Brazil," "The Fury" and "A Clockwork Orange."

"Akira" will have its one-day run September 29 at 2:30, 4:45, 7 and 9:15 p.m. at the Ross Film Theater in Sheldon Memorial Gallery, 12th and R streets.

## "Gobbledygook," "Tango" disappointments

# Innovation and intensity missing

## Reviews



"Gobbledygook"  
The Wendys  
Factory/Eastwest Records

Factory Records used to be the best label for aspiring pop groups. But they've changed.

Responsible for the successes of Joy Division, New Order, A Certain Ratio and The Durutti Column, Factory made a profound difference in the world of music. Now, the label is responsible for such lackluster bands as the Happy Mondays, Revenge . . . and most recently, The Wendys.

"Gobbledygook," the band's debut LP, is a product of the new Factory, sounding very similar to the latest commercial band emerging from Manchester, England, the Happy Mondays.

Jonathon Renton's vocals are pushed out with a polished, breathy whine like the Stone Roses or their baggy, second-rate imitators, The Charlatans U.K. or Happy Mondays. It's a

fine whine, if you like listening to annoying, pimply-faced lyrics.

Musically, "Gobbledygook," does reveal some promise for the band. The bass lines are catchy, and darker than anything Factory has done in years. The tension created beneath the twinkling guitars feels like some kind of subversion to the trendy music they're churning out. You might even call that subversion promising.

"Pulling My Fingers Off" is the only song that works. Luckily, it's the single. It saves the consumer the expense of buying the entire album. Thank heavens for small favors.

The song is simple. Ian White's guitars are delicate, lightly tripping over rattling tambourines.

"Something's Wrong Somewhere" has dark bass undertones and thumping drums, while maintaining the Happy Monday's baggy influence of quasi-dance repetition. So does "Suckling." So does "Removal." And "Soon Is Fine."

And "I Feel Lovely."

Curious.

Ten of the eleven songs sound identical. Sure, they have different titles and some are longer than others. Granted, it is a clever marketing strategy, but so is charging more money for fewer french fries. Or claiming to pay you for using your credit card.

Why bother?

—Michael Stock

"Tango"  
Patty Larkin  
Highstreet Records

Patty Larkin's latest release, "Tango," contains most of the components of a good folk album. It has earthy and occasionally meaningful lyrics. It has Larkin's husky alto voice. It's got mean acoustic guitar work, and even some colorful performances on harmonica, mandolin and accordion. The only thing "Tango" lacks is musical intensity.

Larkin wrote most of the songs on the album, which is why it is strange that the passion in her lyrics is not matched by her melodies. She never modulates or changes dynamics within a cut. Consequently, the pieces sound strangely static.

The title track has a standard rock beat and sounds nothing like a tango. The lyrics describe an on-again, off-again affair. Larkin uses an oddball group of similes like, "It's kind of like romance/Kind of like tight pants/Kind of like Original Sin/Kind of like a tango/Me and you again."

The next cut, "Used to Be," is typical country fare, describing two lonely people at a downtown bar. The singer longs for the good ol' days; unfortunately she sounds more whiny than sentimental.

The album picks up the pace with "Upside Down," the lyrics of which get progressively angry and are reciprocated by a nice build in the music. But once again, Larkin's vocals can't keep up.

The mood of "Time Was" is darker than the rest of the album. Sustained chords played on a fretless bass give the piece a brooding, oppressive feel, effective for a song about emotional betrayal: "Two lovers kiss and I walk by/ Reminded what I'm missing I turn my head and cry."

Patty Larkin is a folk artist with potential. She has already mastered the acoustic guitar and she writes powerful, honest lyrics. If she can learn to sing with that same passion, she may just take the music world by storm.

—Andrea Christensen



Courtesy of eastwest records america  
The Wendys typify the new sound of Factory Records.