Jeff Bridges, Before The Dude

Pauline Kael described Jeff Bridges as “the most natural and least self-conscious screen actor that has ever lived,” and since his breakout role in 1971’s The Last Picture Show, Bridges has been someone you can’t stop watching. He has several iconic roles, none more so than The Dude in The Big Lebowski and exploring Bridges’ work by decade uncovers a worthy crop of films, some of which have not gotten the attention they deserve. For this series we present a selection of some of our favorite Bridges films and books (from fresh-faced kid to 80s dream bunk), all made before The Dude lost his Creedence tapes.

WED, JUL 11, 7:30 PM
THE LAST AMERICAN HERO
Star Ed Lauter in person for post-screening Q&A with Nick Pinkerton and Nicolai Kaprol. A special presentation of the Overkink series.

Jeff Bridges races past a cemetery in his Mustang—fit to wake the dead—kicking off Lamont Johnson’s clear-eyed story about NASCAR legend Junior Johnson. Honing his chops running moonshine for his jail-friendly daddy and his brother Wayne (Gary Busey), sanguine upstart Junior (Bridges) goes from local demolition derby (run by Ned Beatty) to the stock-car circuit, using any means for his profit. The realistic pedal-to-metal races were shot at actual courses, while the [23-year-old] Bridges displays never-seen-done character, matched by the film’s warm, unshowy presentation of the Overdue series.

Wed, Jul 11, 7:30 PM
JAGGED EDGE
Seven years before his Basic Instinct stabbed its way into our hearts for Erotas wrote this sterling thriller with a similar story – this time with Jeff Bridges as the seductive potential murderer. When Jack Forester (Bridges) is accused of murdering his hero’s wife and her mate, he comes attorney Teddy Barnes (Glenn Close) to take on his case. Teddy had left criminal law over an ethical issue years back, but she agrees to take the case because she trusts that he is innocent (with the bonom of battling her old boss). While building the case Teddy can’t resist the charming Jack and the two begin an affair. This tight courtroom thriller keeps you guessing until the very end – with Bridges as seared as he was the year before in Against All Odds (well, almost).

Director: Richard Marquand. 1985 min. 1985. 35mm.

WED, JUL 15, 7:30 PM
AMERICAN HEART
The first time we catch the sight of Jeff Bridges as Jack Ketchum, an aging muscleman running a public transportation bus station. With lean muscles, long hair and a handlebar mustache, Jack is a “middle weight” criminal released on parole and trying to stay straight, reluctantly tending to his teenager Nick (Edward Furlong). Director Martin Bell, talked with making a narrative feature similar to his documentary Streetwise, succeeded in casting actors that do not come across as caricatures of the kids he and Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio so deftly captured in the documentary. Also set in Seattle with vibrant scenes of street life punctuating the drama of father and son, American Heart proves that Bridges has always favored challenging, character-driven roles throughout his career (he also served as executive producer for the film). Director: Martin Bell. 113 min. 1992. 35mm. Also screening in this series in August: The Fisher King, Cutty's Way, and Against All Odds. Visit 92Ytribeca.org/JeffBridges for details.

FRU, JUL 6, 7:30 PM
NIGHTHAWKS
Sylvester Stallone knocks it out of the park in his first straight-action movie. Here he’s a bad-ass New York cop who’s assigned to track down international terrorists Wallgar, played by Rutger Hauer with his trademarked combination of sexy and psychotic. A thrilling cat and mouse game ensues along with scenes of discotheque mayhem, cross-dressing butt-kicking, and more peril in public transportation than you can shake an overpriced mentos at of. Co-starring Billy Bob Thornton and Lindsay Duncan, this is a top-tier Stallone and one of the great New York thrillers.

Director: Bruce Malmuth. 99 min. 1981. 35mm.
THE IRON MULE SHORT COMEDY FILM FESTIVAL
This month we’re featuring an Indian short called Curva, Paola Susanelli’s story of the battles that remained after Italy’s surrender in WWII. From LA, Dave Green’s Eli Sandoval revolves around a magic sandwich that transports a man further back in time with every bite. Also, new animated films about office intrigue and talking deer from Stephen Naczyk and Fei Ma. Plus, Zombie Barbeau, our latest Wanna Bie A Star movie and a few extra films to be announced.

TUE, JUL 10, 7PM

BIRDS OF PASSAGE
Followed by a live performance in the café.

BIRDS OF PASSAGE presents a lyrical journey through the everyday lives of two young Uruguayan songwriters. Ernesto and Yisela have moved to the capital, leaving behind their respective hometowns on the borders of Brazil and Argentina. After many years of composing songs that reflect their origins, both decide to explore new horizons and each seeks to fulfill the dream of recording a first album. While Yisela struggles to reconcile the emerging possibilities of their career with her plans to move to Argentina, Ernesto confronts personal conflicts that threaten to sabotage his creative passion. The film fuses the arts of documentary film and music, interweaving the stories and songs of two young composers with vibrant cinematography and an unforgettable soundtrack. BIRDS OF PASSAGE explores the challenges of being a young artist and the art of searching, inside and outside of oneself.


FRI, JUL 13, 8PM

REDNECKSPLONTATION DOUBLE FEATURE: POOR PRETTY EDDIE AND REDNECK MILLER
Part of the Beer Goggles series. Guest curated by Marc Walkow.

Much as Blaxploitation was a genre not only featuring African-American characters and situations, but also aimed heavily at the same type of audience, so Redeckspolitizatoin (or Redneckipation) is aimed at southern and rural white audiences, who most likely saw the movies projected at local drive-ins in late-night, double-feature tiers. Featuring good old boys, loose women, country music, car races, car accidents, bad guys, guns and lots of beer, the movies depicted about as realistic a portrait of their baldly characters as Blaxploitation films did of theirs. But in terms of entertainment value, many of the movies are solid gold and when the mainstream entertainment industry caught on, it gave birth to things like the Dukes of Hazzard TV show. Clint Eastwood’s Every Which Way movies and the Smokey and the Bandit phenomenon.

6PM

POOR PRETTY EDDIE
When a sophisticated African-American singer’s car breaks down on the streets, sure, Elvis-improvising mechanic Eddie comes to her rescue. But after he develops an infatuation with her, it turns into a rape-heavy kidnapping, complete with synchynch, jealous hotel owner Big Bertha (Shelley Winters). Followed by a live performance in the café.

9:45PM

REDNECK MILLER
Good old boy DJ Miller spins records at a country/western radio station and loves both his Schlitz and his ladies with equal gusto. But when his prize chopper is stolen and used in a drug shipment robbery, he has to take matters into his own hands to clear his name before local “black mafia” leader SuperMac takes it out on his ass.

Director: John Clayton. 1977. 35mm.

WED, JUL 18, 8PM

MEET THE LADY: BURLESCLE
Tom Blunt’s long-running variety program catapults from the screening room to the mainstage for a spectacular event celebrating the tradition of burlesque in cinema... and vice versa! Brush yourself up for an orgy of intellectual and carnal delights: a blend of blares live performances, obscure film clips, and special guest appearances — with a killer after-party to follow. Featuring: Special live interview with legendary burlesque artist Julie Atlas Munz; phone Q&A with film actress Beth Grant; Presentations by singer-songwriter Jill Sobule and Gypsy Rose Lee biographer Karen Abbott. Performances by Iris Exploision, Go-Go Handler, Fem Appeal and more! With stage-kitten Ariel Riala. After-party with DJ Accident Report (and the Warm Leatherettes)

THU, JUL 19, 8:15PM, $18

THE KARATE KID
Part of the series Basic Cable Classics. Star Ralph Macchio in person for a post-screening Q&A!

Previously arrived in Cali, scrappy Jersey Boy Daniel LaRusso (Ralph Macchio) meets with a cute cheerleader to the tune of Blaxploitation’s “Ciciel Summen,” only to find himself in an ongoing tussle with her ex and his crew of diet-baking Aryan hooligans. With no one else to turn to, LaRusso discovers crossing Oktawan karate master Mr Miyagi (Oscar nominated Pat Morita) to take time off from catching flies with cheerleaders and help him take on the creeps of Cobra Kai. The unstoppable sleazy bit of summer ‘84. The Karate Kid is a rare one of the most enduring all-time enduring flicks, beloved by an old-school pro who practically invented the genre, John G. Avildsen (Rocky). Earnest but never cornball, the film has the gentle quality of a fable, with its character cast of Daniel-San and Miyagi’s quirky and endearing friendship allowed to play out in long, unbroken takes. Among the many highlights: a climactic tournament montage scored to the unforgettable Joe Esposito anthem “You’re the Best” and William Zabka in the role of Johnny “Sweep the Leg” Lawrence, steering his way into the Blond Preppy Josh Jarrah of Fame.


MON, JUL 23, 7:30PM

CUTOUT FEST - INTERNATIONAL ANIMATION FILM FESTIVAL MEXICO
Part of the series Festival Playlist. CutOut Fest is Mexico’s largest animation festival, presenting the best new animated works from around the world with a special focus on films produced in Mexico and Latin America. For this touring program, the festival’s programmers have pulled together the best of the past year.

9:20PM

CUTOUT FEST - INTERNATIONAL ANIMATION FILM FESTIVAL MEXICO

THU, JUL 26, 7:30PM

LAWS OF GRAVITY
Part of the series Curated by Nick Pinkerton and Nicolas Rapold.

FIlmed in burrowing, bottom-of-the-scrum verité style for a budget of peanuts in the mean streets of Williamsburg and Greenpoint by three 20-year-old writer-director Gomez, Laws of Gravity depicts a world of doubiously-employed Brooklyn kids, flare-up picnic scraps, and blue-collar scrappiness.

The great Peter Greene, whose work here and in Lodge Kerrigan’s Shen, shone here. Director Gomez, 2009. 35mm.

FRI, JUL 27, 7:30PM

JOE WOO DOUBLE FEATURE: HEROES SHED NO TEARS AND HARD BOILED
Part of the series Not Coming to a Theater Near You, presented by the film blog of the same name.

7:30PM

HEROES SHED NO TEARS
While still under contract with Raymond Chow’s Golden Harvest, where he had shot several directing comedies and kung-fu films since the mid-70s, John Woo made the now-seldom-seen ultra-rare Hool No-Tin, an explosive and savage war movie that he would later call his “first real film.” Shot in Thailand in 1983 but only released when still under contract, a highly-offensive cast of paramilitary heroes was restored in Thailand, where it premiered to enthusiastic response. The film, also known as Sren Ho, was commercially successful, grossing over 2 billion baht and becoming the highest-grossing film of the year in its home country. The film earned international acclaim, winning several awards at the Venice Film Festival and Helping Hand Cinema honored John Woo with the award for Best Director at the Hollywood Independent Film Festival.

Director: John Woo. 93 min. 1986. 35mm.

9:20PM

HARD BOILED
Hard Boiled was John Woo’s last film in his native Hong Kong, in which he had been writing, producing and directing action pictures of much dynamism and renown for over two decades. It is a2444 technically and aesthetically impressive film, packed with an enormous amount of action and violence, featuring some of the best fight scenes in cinematic history. The film is also notable for its depiction of the Hong Kong underworld, which is portrayed in a highly realistic and authentic manner.

Director: John Woo. 126 min. 1992. 35mm.

Order online and pay no service fees at 92YTribeca.org or call 212.601.1000. All screenings are $12 unless otherwise noted. 92Y Tribeca Film Club members get $4 off all tickets. Visit 92Ytribeca.org for updates and additions.

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