

SCREENBURN

josh winning's hot pics from the flicks

FILM FOCUS

SOCKET

OUT: MON 9 JUNE, TLA



It's not every day you come across a gay sci-fi flick. Then again, we shouldn't be that surprised. Science fiction's calling card has always been testing limits, charting unexplored territory, and boldly going 'where no man has ever gone before'. Ahem. So *Socket* is something of an anomaly. Part science-fiction thriller, part Cronenberg-ian body horror, part gay love story... "No one in Hollywood is gay!" deadpans Matthew Montgomery, yin to lead man Derek Long's yang. "Well, just between you and me, yes I'm gay. But don't tell anyone. I really don't want my career to be ruined because of it."

When Dr Matthews (Long) is struck by lightning and survives, hospital intern

Craig Murphy (Montgomery) introduces him to an underground group hooked on the buzz of self-electrocution. As the pair become passionately involved, things turn sinister when Matthews develops a wrist-plug which means getting that all-important fix is a little too easy.

Firmly entrenched in B-movie territory, *Socket* is a testament to the power of

polished scriptwriting. Despite its relatively low budget (in comparison to other Hollywood offerings), its snappy dialogue and surprisingly erotically-charged scenes downplay the camp and heighten the drama. "I loved the team that worked on *Socket*," Montgomery enthuses, "we had a blast, man!" Sharing undeniably cracking chemistry with co-star Long, Montgomery was also required to bare more than a few of his own circuits. Was he put off by all the nudity? "Not really put off as much as mortified. Let's put it this way... my mother watches *all* my movies."

At a breezy 90 minutes, *Socket* never outstays its welcome. Though its fanatical third act slightly beggars belief, this is a zippy, electrifying erotic thriller. And things are left nicely open for a sequel. A gay Frankenstein's monster for the new millennium.



Matthew Montgomery

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LOVE SICK

OUT: MON 2 JUNE, TLA

This moochy Romanian love story saunters casually along, gradually unravelling the romantic relationship of Alex (Ioana Barbu) and Kiki (Maria Popistasu). But why is Kiki's brother so jealous? Despite some decent performances, *Love Sick* is at times achingly dull, while never fully developing its central drama. As a gay romance commendably free from over-the-top

trauma and theatrics, it nevertheless fails to find a way to keep things interesting. Shove on *Sugar Rush* instead.



DREAMLAND

OUT: MON 30 JUNE, DNC Entertainment

Put-upon Audrey (Agnes Bruckner of *24*) is exceptionally bright, but marooned in a trailer park called 'Dreamland' with her agoraphobic father and MS-suffering friend. Can she leave them for a shiny college lifestyle? And more importantly, does she want to? Bleached landscapes re-painted with the choicest hues and a well-rounded cast (including *Sex And The City's*

John Corbett) make this an attractive if melodramatic coming-of-ager.



PENELOPE

OUT: MON 23 JUNE, Momentum

A wonderfully whimsical premise - Christina Ricci as a pig-nosed girl waiting for her knight in shining armour to marry her and break the porcine curse - keeps this fun fantasy afloat despite some iffy plot posturing. Stuffed with Brits attempting an American twang (look out for Nick *Hot Fuzz* Frost and Russell Brand), James McAvoy's presence ups the dish quota while Ricci excels in a genre that still suits her even after over a

decade's worth of *Caspers* and *Addams's*.



MOUTH TO MOUTH

OUT: MON 16 JUNE, Dogwoof Pictures

Alongside Shia Labeouf, Ellen Page has quickly established herself as an actress to keep a hawk-like eye on. Unlike Shia, she is frequently the best thing in most of the films she attaches herself to. As a disillusioned teen (nicknamed 'Bat') in this *Beach*-esque drama, her emotive internal struggles with teenager-ly trauma are far above anything else on offer.



SKIN FLICK

OUT: MON 16 JUNE, Peccadillo

No surprise that this clash of porn and politics comes from the same director as last month's *Raspberry Reich*. Further exploring his obsession with social boundaries and on-screen sex, Bruce LaBruce's *Skin Flick* throws skinheads into the poli-porn mix. Pumped full of bad acting, stilted dialogue and edited-down sex scenes, *Skin* ultimately fails both as

eroticism and entertainment.



THE DIVING BELL AND THE BUTTERFLY

OUT: MON 9 JUNE, Pathe

Film-making has come a long way in the past decade. The phrase "un-filmable" can no longer be applied to any book - take Peter Jackson's breathless *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Take, also, this French tearjerker. Based on the memoirs of former *Elle* editor Jean-Dominique Bauby, which he dictated to his nurse via eye-blinks after a stroke rendered him

paralysed, *Diving Bell* is a towering motion picture triumph. Ignore certain moments of over sentimentality; this is graceful, elegiac film poetry.