

FILM New seekers

Poignant personal journeys across desert, mountain, generation gap and hair salon. By Sam Bain



FILM Meek's Cutoff

DIRECTED BY KELLY REICHARDT

Meeke's *Cutoff* is a fresh take on the Western. It's directed by a woman – Kelly Reichardt, who re-teams with her *Wendy and Lucy* star Michelle Williams – and favours low-key character drama over ridin' and shootin'. We follow a collection of families journeying to a new life in the West, who get horribly, possibly fatally, lost in the Oregon desert. At times the film gives the viewer an all-too-convincing experience of what being stranded in an endless desert would feel like, but the dreamlike mood and great performances – notably Bruce Greenwood as the arrogant guide – make the journey worthwhile. Stock up on the Diet Coke, though.



FILM Vidal Sassoon: The Movie

DIRECTED BY CRAIG TEPER

You know that you're not getting 'warts and all' when a documentary begins by comparing its subject to Albert Einstein and Jesus. This is an unashamedly admiring portrait of a Swinging Sixties icon, a man who revolutionised the way women saw themselves with a few deft snips of his scissors. The film contains fascinating tidbits about Sassoon's early life – his mother abandoned him to an orphanage and he enlisted in the Israeli army – then tracks his rise from Carnaby Street to Beverly Hills via film fame as the man who gave Mia Farrow her distinctive, cropped hairdo in *Rosemary's Baby*. It's a shampoo, set and match.



FILM The Way

DIRECTED BY EMILIO ESTEVEZ

The perfect Catholic date movie, *The Way*, starring Martin Sheen and directed by his son Emilio Estevez, is the moving story of a Californian doctor who walks the Camino de Santiago – 800 kilometres through the French and Spanish Pyrenees – haunted by visions of his estranged son (Estevez) who died attempting the ancient pilgrimage. The story begins to wobble when the walking montages crank up to a soundtrack of Coldplay, but Sheen's quietly powerful performance offers us a glimpse into the torment of an average man struck by tragedy. Ironically, the ideal audience for this spiritual tale is probably Sheen's younger son, 'coke 'n' hookers' Charlie...



DVD Somewhere

DIRECTED BY SOFIA COPPOLA

Sofia Coppola's *Somewhere* stars Stephen Dorff as movie brat Johnny Marco and Elle Fanning as the 11-year-old daughter who he is forced to accommodate into his wild lifestyle (think booze, plaster casts and pole-dancing twins). The fact that it was snubbed by the Oscars but won a Golden Lion at the 2010 Venice Festival is not so surprising since the film's heart lies less with LA and more with the European arthouse cinema of the Sixties and Seventies. It's more interested in mood than plot – and therein lies its charm, and also its frustrations. It's the cinematic equivalent of a fish tank – lovely to look at, but hardly requiring your full attention.