

life *weekend*

Time to lasso the truth

THE WONDER OF YOU: A new documentary about Wonder Woman and superheroines to be shown at the GAZE Festival sheds light on the role of women in society *By Pavel Barter*

WHEN American film-maker Kristy Guevara-Flanagan (pictured below) was a child, she sat glued to Saturday morning shows such as Wonder Woman and The Bionic Woman. After the credits rolled she twirled around, invoking her own inner superhero, made bionic sounds and tried to jump bushes in slow motion.

Reminiscing in Dublin, where the director has arrived to present her documentary Wonder Women! The Untold Story Of American Superheroines as part of this year's GAZE film festival, she acknowledges the shows were campy and the clothes were ridiculous. 'Then again,' she says. 'It was the 1970s and everyone looked ridiculous.'

Guevara-Flanagan's voyage of discovery began when she read an article about Gail Simone, who became the first female to write Wonder Woman comics in 2007. 'That struck me,' she says. 'Here was this icon of feminism and female power that had always been written and controlled by men. I decided to research Wonder Woman's origins.'

Guevara-Flanagan travelled around the United States over the course of four years, interviewing people such as Wonder Woman actress Lynda Carter and The Bionic Woman's Lindsay Wagner. She hung out at comic conventions; spoke to feminists, riot grrls, and Wonder Woman aficionados.



For many fans, Wonder Woman empowers and inspires. Yet, as the documentary reveals, Wonder Woman's representation over the decades provides deeper insights into women's position in society. Created by psychologist and writer William Moulton Marston in 1941, the character was initially intended to provide a strong female character for young readers. 'Wonder Woman is propaganda for the new type of woman who should, I believe, rule the world,' he wrote.

Wonder Woman was initially painted as a warrior princess of the Amazon tribe, who sported a Lasso Of Truth and a pair of indestructible bracelets. Her kick-ass tendencies were in line with women's role in the war effort. 'It was a great opportunity for women [in the US] to enter the workforce in huge numbers, learn how to fly planes, and prove they could be trained to do any skills,' says Guevara-Flanagan.

When men returned from the war, they wanted their jobs back. Women were designated to the kitchen and 1950s Wonder Woman favoured romance over hounding supervillains. 'In the 1940s she was saving her male love interest, Steve Trevor. In the 1950s, Wonder Woman is blushing and being carried over streams. It's complete role reversal.'

In the 1960s, the warrior princess became a spy in the vein of Emma Peel from The Avengers. 'She had great fashion sense but she wasn't Wonder Woman. She didn't have superpowers. It just didn't make any sense.'

The 1970s changed all that. Until then, there had been no female-fronted action shows, but the success of Lynda Carter's Wonder Woman led to The Bionic Woman and Charlie's Angels. The time was right, explains the director: 'The woman's movement and civil rights had happened. Women were making more demands and divorce was happening.'

Just when things were looking up for female superheroes, the 1980s arrived. This was an era of hyper-



masculine stars such as Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone, virility and patriotism. Guevara-Flanagan sees it as a backlash to the feminist movement. Nevertheless, her documentary acknowledges that perhaps the greatest female action hero of all time emerged in this era: Sigourney Weaver's Ripley from Aliens.

there are painfully few. Wonder Woman is an iconographic image, a perennial presence at costume parties, and sits alongside Batman and Superman in the stable of DC Comics. But she has yet to have her own Hollywood film.

'Let's face it,' says the director. 'It's about time.'

Wonder Women! The Untold Story Of American Superheroines, is being screened tomorrow (Light House, 4.30pm) as part of the Gaze film festival. www.gaze.ie

AFTER Buffy The Vampire Slayer and Zena Warrior Princess were killed off, what pop culture role models can young women now turn to? wonders Guevara-Flanagan. Aside from a few exceptions such as The Hunger Games,



Left: A Wonder Woman impersonator featured in the documentary

GAZE FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

In a year that celebrates the 20th anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Ireland, this year's Gaze film festival is suitably equipped. There's a free screening of *The Love That Dare Not Speak Its Name* (Sun, 4.30pm), a seminal documentary about gay life in Ireland that covers the 100 years from Oscar Wilde to decriminalisation. After the screening, director Bill Hughes will attend a panel discussion. Irish gay film-making is on display as part of an Irish shorts programme (Sat, 6.30pm), and Cork



actor Luke Murphy co-stars in the American feature *Five Dances* (Sat, 4.30pm). Other highlights include *The Man Behind The Throne* (Aug 05, 1.30pm) about Vincent Paterson, dance choreographer for Madonna and Michael Jackson. There are edgy musical transgressions in *Pussy Riot - A Punk Prayer* (Sat, 10.30pm) and *She Said Boom, The Story Of Fifth Column* (today, 6.30pm). Anyone with an interest in cult cinema should check out *I Am Divine* (Mon, 8pm), a biopic of the brilliantly depraved Pink Flamingos star (pictured). *Until Mon, Lighthouse Cinema, Smithfield Square D7, various prices. www.gaze.ie*

CLUBS

Lunar Disko Birthday Party

Lunar Disko is proof it's possible to make it while remaining in Dublin. The brainchild of Barry Donovan and Andy Doyle, the club started eight years ago and has brought over every relevant act in the electro, Italo and jacking house scene, from Legowelt and DJ TLR to Egyptian Lover and DJ Overdose. Five years ago, a label of the same name started to release records in a similar vein. *Tonight, Lunar Disko Birthday Party, Sweeney Mongrel, Dame Street D2, 10pm, €5 donation.*

To celebrate both milestones, the Lunar Disko crew welcome Liverpool wunderkind John Heckle (pictured), whose fresh take on Chicago house has appeared on Mathematics and Crème, to perform. He's joined by Andrew Ingram, who runs Tabernade, for two shows. The first is in the Sweeney Mongrel, while the merry crew head to the Dark Horse for an early morning session on Saturday. *Tomorrow, Lunar Disko Birthday Party, The Dark Horse Inn, George's Quay D2, 7am, €10.*



Derrick May

Derrick May is the creator of some of Detroit techno's greatest records, but these days, he is best known for his DJ skills. Mixing disco and deep house with the ghetto sounds of Relief and Detroit sounds, May's wild style approach to DJing was best captured on the 1997 Mayday mix for Open. His performance is a thing to behold, so expect a full house.

Sun, Subject/Pogo, The Twisted Pepper, Middle Abbey Street D1, 11pm, €14 to €16.

Mathew Jonson

Canadian producer Mathew Jonson plays his first show in Dublin in five years. Responsible for modern days classics like Marionette and India In Me, Jonson has a new album, Her Blurry Pictures, out on Crosstown Rebels and will be performing tracks from it at this intimate live show.

Tomorrow, Abstract, Pygmalion, 2, Coppinger Row D2, 10pm, €8 to €10.

Richard Brophy