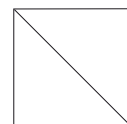




Genre Junction

While the road movie is an iconic genre in itself, it is often used as just one ingredient in a potent genre cocktail. JEZ CONOLLY examines six road movies that are more than just road movies.



FIVE EASY PIECES (1970)

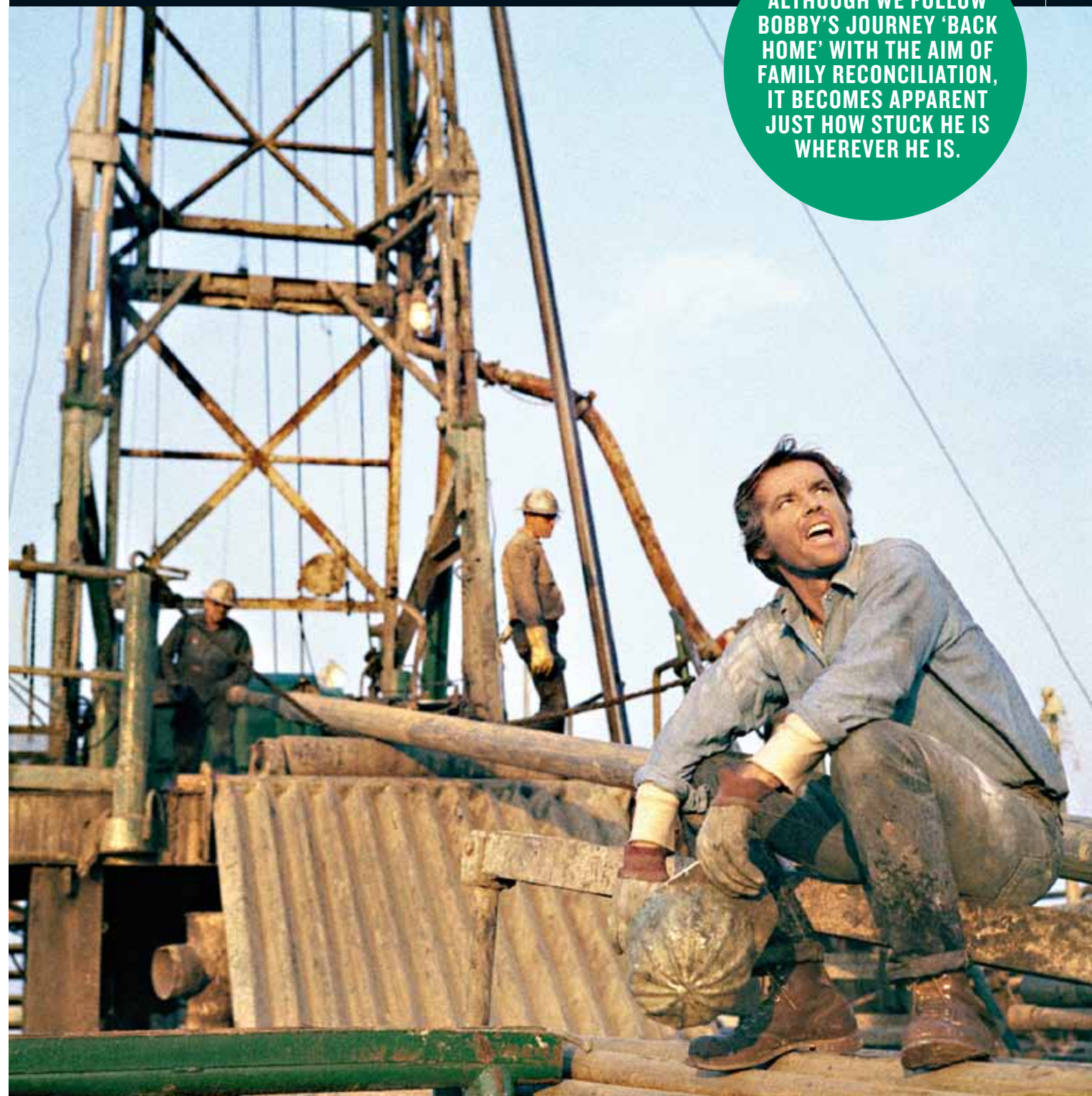
Dir. Bob Rafelson

Part drama, part probing character study and part road movie, *Five Easy Pieces* focuses on Bobby Eroica Dupea (Jack Nicholson) who, once a promising pianist from an affluent family of classical musicians, is now living a nomadic existence, wandering from motel to motel, working as an oil rigger, with his waitress girlfriend Rayette Dipesto (Karen Black) permanently in tow. When he learns his father is very ill, he has to return to his previous life.

The road in *Five Easy Pieces* is symbolic of emotional uncertainty. Although we follow Bobby's journey 'back home' with the aim of family reconciliation, it becomes apparent just how stuck he is wherever he is – be it in his dead-end Californian blue collar existence or back at his wealthy Seattle home. Bobby may be on the move but he is caught in a rootless, existential drift. The film ends on an ambiguous note that leaves Bobby much as we first found him: lost, homeless and confused.

Five Easy Pieces is back in UK cinemas from 13 August. For more details see page 46.

LEFT
KAREN BLACK AND JACK NICHOLSON
BELOW
JACK NICHOLSON IS A LONG WAY FROM HOME



ALTHOUGH WE FOLLOW BOBBY'S JOURNEY 'BACK HOME' WITH THE AIM OF FAMILY RECONCILIATION, IT BECOMES APPARENT JUST HOW STUCK HE IS WHEREVER HE IS.

Images Courtesy Park Circus / Sony Pictures

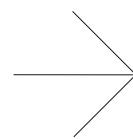


***Y Tu Mamá También* uses the premise and formalities of the road movie love triangle to fuse gritty social comment and a coming-of-age sex comedy.**

Y TU MAMÁ TAMBIÉN (2001)

Dir. Alfonso Cuarón

Having seen off their girlfriends, who are travelling in Europe, two young Mexicans – Julio (Gael García Bernal) and Tenoch (Diego Luna) – are stuck for something to do for the rest of the summer; they decide on a road trip to find the mythical beach known as ‘Heaven’s Mouth’. At a family wedding they meet Luisa (Maribel Verdú), an older woman from Spain, who surprisingly agrees to accompany them on their trip. The boys compete to seduce the more experienced Luisa, whose presence brings out both the best and the worst in them. They learn things about each that they never knew, despite having been best friends for years, and as their journey progresses, all three companions find themselves confronted with their innermost demons and desires. *Y Tu Mamá También* uses the premise and formalities of the road movie love triangle to fuse gritty social comment and a coming-of-age sex comedy.



DETOUR (1945)

Dir. Edgar G. Ulmer

A second-rate pianist, Al Roberts (Tom Neal), is hitchhiking in pursuit of his singer girlfriend, Sue (Claudia Drake), who has fled the sleazy club-land of New York to find fame in Hollywood. Roberts is picked up by a man named Haskell (Edmund McDonald), with a pill-popping habit and some nasty scratches on his hand. Haskell promptly dies at the wheel, panicking Roberts into assuming Haskell’s identity so as not to be blamed for the ‘murder’. Soon after, he picks up another hitcher, Vera (Ann Savage), the femme fatale who inflicted Haskell’s scratches and who now tries to blackmail Roberts. A brilliant synthesis of film noir and road movie, *Detour’s* opening credits, looking backwards down the highway, foreshadow the film’s fatalistic sense of entrapment. Since we cannot see where we are going, these pre-narrative shots emphasize how the road haunts the destination in the road movie, just as the past in film noir haunts the future.

ABOVE LEFT
MARIBEL VERDÚ AND FRIENDS
OPPOSITE
TOM NEAL AND ANN SAVAGE



DETOUR’S OPENING CREDITS, LOOKING BACKWARDS DOWN THE HIGHWAY, FORESHADOW THE FILM’S FATALISTIC SENSE OF ENTRAPMENT.



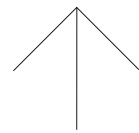


THE HITCHER (1986)

Dir. Robert Harmon

Ignoring his mother's advice not to pick up strangers, Jim Halsey (C. Thomas Howell) picks up more than he bargained for when he stops to give a lift to a psychotic drifter by the name of Ryder (Rutger Hauer). Nothing can stop Ryder playing his evil mind games; he usually murders the drivers with whom he hitches lifts but, when Jim decides to eject him from the car, Ryder engages him in a deadly game of tit for tat on the Texas highways.

Both thriller and road movie, *The Hitcher* is a claustrophobic, neo-noir, loss-of-innocence, homoerotic, paranoid western strapped into the back seat with Hitchcock at the wheel. Hauer's performance emphasizes the isolation of the road and serves to reinvent the maniac-at-large strand of chiller by transplanting the threat into the most confined of spaces: the passenger seat of Halsey's car. Watch out for some finger-licking Texan French fries.



***The Hitcher* is a claustrophobic, neo-noir, loss-of-innocence, homoerotic, paranoid western strapped into the back seat with Hitchcock at the wheel.**



ABOVE
JEAN-PIERRE DARROUSSIN

FEUX ROUGES / RED LIGHTS (2004)

Dir. Cédric Kahn

Adapted from the novel by Georges Simenon, *Red Lights* stars Jean-Pierre Darroussin as Antoine, an insurance clerk married to Helene (Carole Bouquet), a beautiful and successful lawyer. On the hottest day of the year, the bickering couple decides to take a road trip across France in order to pick up their holidaying children. Already fuelled by alcohol, Antoine makes frequent stops to take a nip or two of whisky, and eventually returns to his car to find that Helene has decided to go on by train. However, when he rushes to the next stop to try and catch her, she cannot be found. An extraordinary search ensues. Kahn creates an unnerving fusion of road movie and European existential drama, and one that arguably also sets out to make a point about the 'Americanization' of French culture by shifting the location of Simenon's novel from the U.S. East Coast to the North East of France.

Kahn creates an unnerving fusion of road movie and European existential drama... by shifting the location of Simenon's novel from the U.S. East Coast to the North East of France.

SPOTLIGHT

CINEMA'S THEMATIC STRANDS



Kobal

THE MINIMAL ROAD TRIP PLOT PROVIDES CROSBY AND HOPE WITH PLENTY OF EXCUSES FOR THEIR REQUISITE SONGS AND AD-LIBBED GAGS.

ROAD TO SINGAPORE (1962)

Dir. Victor Schertzinger

The first in the popular series of 'Road to...' movies – starring Bing Crosby and Bob Hope, with Dorothy Lamour as the love interest – *Road To Singapore* featured Bing and Bob as Josh and Ace, a pair of pals who run off to Singapore to escape forced marriages. The boys are determined never to bother with women again until they run into Lamour, a sarong-wearing dancer suffering through a relationship with a bullying musical partner. Josh and Ace rescue her and fight with each other for her hand as they try to elude a wacky variety of pursuers. Besides spoofing the action adventure and romance genres, the 'Road to...' movies are a parody of Hollywood itself, with a sprinkling of references to other actors and the occasional swipe at Paramount Pictures. Despite its title, this is a comedy first, a musical second and a road movie third. The minimal road trip plot provides Crosby and Hope with plenty of excuses for their requisite songs and ad-libbed gags. **[tbp]**

LEFT
DOROTHY LAMOUR, BING CROSBY & BOB HOPE

also see... **[WEB]** Road Movies Media Resource: www.lib.berkeley.edu **[BOOK]** The Road Movie Book edited by

Steve Cohan and Ina Rae Hark **[BOOK]** 100 Road Movies: BFI Screen Guides by Jason Wood