

FILMS OUT IN NOVEMBER



BLINDNESS

Blindness comes with a promising pedigree. A Cannes entry earlier this year, it's the work of director Fernando Meirelles – the man who gave us the hugely acclaimed *City Of God* and *The Constant Gardener*

– and is based on the book of the same name by Nobel-prize winning author José Saramago. A mystery illness sweeps an unnamed city, instantly turning people blind. One of the first to

be infected is ophthalmologist Mark Ruffalo. The infected are quarantined in a disused and filthy old hospital. Not wishing to be separated from her husband, Ruffalo's wife, played by Julianne

Moore, also claims to be blind, although she appears to be the only person immune to the illness. The epidemic worsens and the hospital quickly fills up. The patients have been abandoned, and hostility begins to break out between those in the different wards over access to meagre food supplies. Eventually, even the soldiers guarding the hospital fall prey to the illness, and the 'inmates' are able to escape, to blindly stumble around a city in apocalyptic turmoil. Films depicting the end of civilisation hold a morbid grip on our imagination – from *Mad Max* through to *I Am Legend*. However, it would be wrong to lump *Blindness* within that genre. It's a far more esoteric and philosophical treatment, rich in metaphor but sadly lacking in suspense or thrills. In fact, it's a surprisingly downbeat and somewhat depressing cinematic outing which grimly plods along towards its unconvincing and convenient denouement. It runs for two hours but feels a hell of a lot longer. **DH**

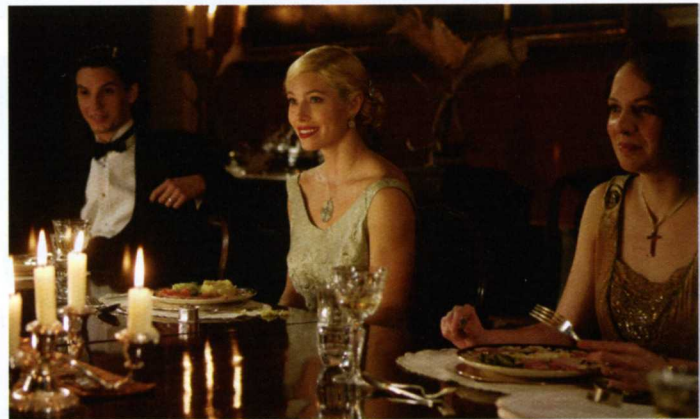
**Out: 28 November**

★★★★★

EASY VIRTUE

Mother-in-laws are notoriously difficult to please. This time around, the mother is an upper-class matron of the 'shires whose prodigal son has returned home from the French Riviera with an American divorcée as his new bride. Cue a 'fish out of water' story as Larita, the American, tries to fit into this aristocratic family and adjust to country life in their crumbling pile. Based on a 1924 play by Noel Coward, *Easy Virtue* is an examination of the inter-war period when the sun set on the Edwardian age and rose on the American-driven jazz age.

Kristin Scott Thomas, haughty and patrician as the mother, lords over her hen-pecked husband, Colin Firth. Normally seen in leading roles, the two prove their worth as character actors. Freed from having to be attractive, they seem more comfortable than ever. Larita, played by American Jessica Biel, is radiant. However when called upon to play complex emotions she doesn't always ring true. On the other hand, Ben Barnes proves he is a star in the making with good looks and a quiet confidence. Stephan Elliott, director of *Priscilla Queen of the Desert* [see



interview on page 36], directs this entertaining outing with a lightness of touch. His musical soundtrack is a delight. **KH**

**Out: 7 November**

★★★★★

CHOKO

A coming-of-age tale for an emotionally stunted generation X, now slightly more dishevelled and cynical – if not much wiser – than a few years ago. *Choke*, adapted from cult author Chuck 'Fight Club' Palahniuk's 2001 novel, brings us Victor, romantic antihero for the warped and weary 21st century. A twenty-something medical school drop-out, he pays for his drug-ruined mother's nursing home fees by 'choking' in restaurants and attracting the sympathies and cash of rich wannabe saviors.



While caring for his mother (Anjelica Huston), Victor is also battling sex addiction, with little success, and shovels shit at the colonial theme

park where he works as an indentured servant. Though *Choke* is likely to come under fire for being too gimmicky – the incessant sex, colonial costuming and repetitive Heimlich manoeuvres are but a few contrivances – Rockwell is so sympathetic as Victor that he saves the piece from pretension. Don't expect *Choke* to pack the same cold punch as *Fight Club*; while it's rated 18 for the sex scenes, when you melt it down it's a heart-warming comedy about mother-son relationships and the search for love. On those terms, it's a great little film. **PC**

**Out: 21 November**

★★★★★