

BRAZIL

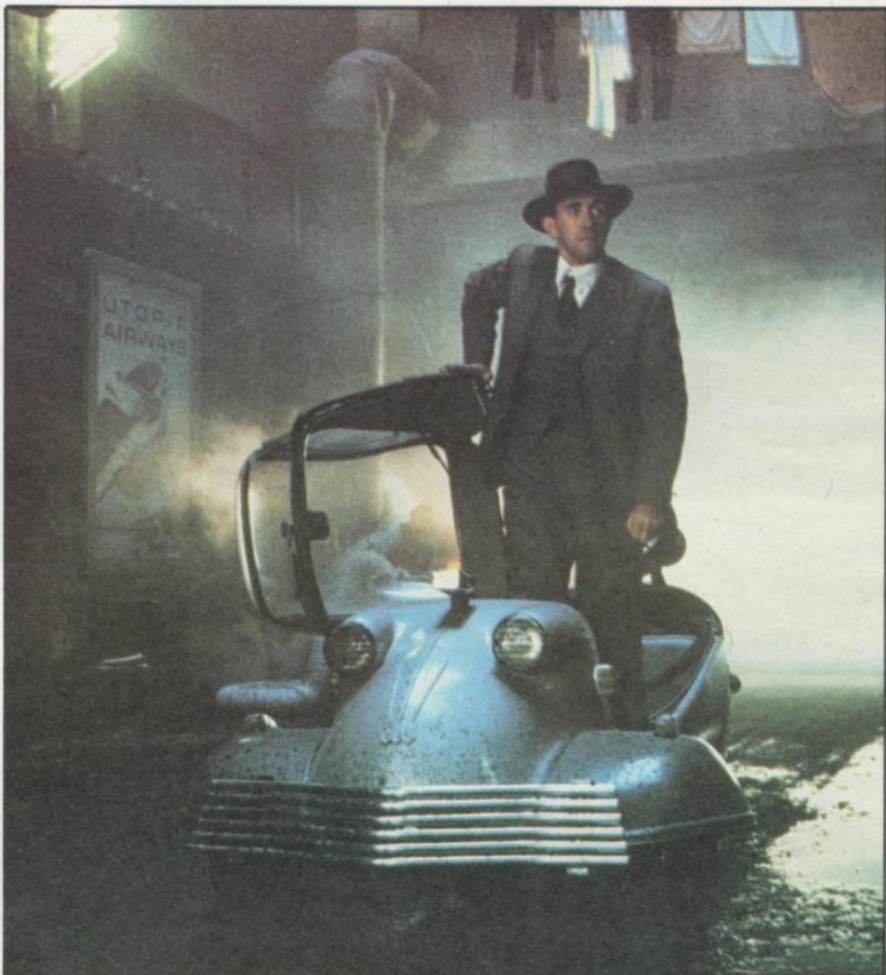
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"Flashes of brilliance to take your breath away"

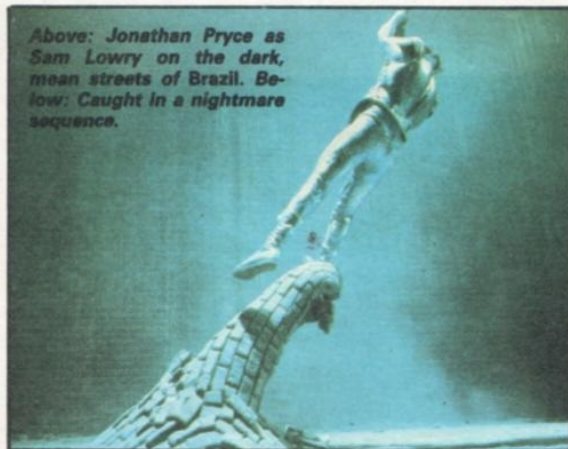
Brazil can either be described as a black romantic fantasy comedy set somewhere in the 20th century which concerns two innocents caught up in an Orwellian nightmare world of red tape. Or more simply – a Terry Gilliam film. The latter description should explain all the uncontrolled weirdness on show in yet another un-categorisable epic from one of the most talented and visionary directors around.

But although indescribably off-beat, *Brazil* is an embarrassment of riches. Mind-boggling retro-future production design by Norman Garwood and a non-stop visual assortment of special effects and sight gags are all very well. It's just that 2½ hours of it is at least an hour too much. Gilliam should have spent more time in the cutting room and made *Brazil* a compact film like his brilliant *Time Bandits*. Or could it be that this drawn-out never-ending story is his way of making certain points about life in a 1984-like totalitarian existence situated on the other side of now? Some people may not stay the course to find out.

Whatever, *Brazil* emerges more as an indulgence and a personal paranoia



Above: Jonathan Pryce as Sam Lowry on the dark, mean streets of Brazil. Below: Caught in a nightmare sequence.



doctrine thinly stretched to the limits, which greatly undermines the central truths at the core of a very worthwhile film, even though Gilliam admits he cheats and doesn't provide any answers.

When he highlights actress Katherine Helmond as a matriarch obsessed with plastic surgery or Robert De Niro as an S.A.S. type plumber, Gilliam is on firm ground indeed. But by presenting too many dreams within nightmares within a warped reality, he loses his footing and like *Brazil's* hero, Jonathan Pryce, and Icarus, flies too close to the sun.

Don't let any of this put you off seeing *Brazil* though. A failure on certain levels it may be, but it is also

without doubt one of the most audacious and intriguing fantasies to come our way in a long while. It offers sharp consumer parodies and supplies some outrageous flashes of brilliance to take your breath away. And it is far more successful than *Buckaroo Banzai* in creating a believably unique and separate universe.

Starring: Jonathan Pryce (*Sam Lowry*), Robert De Niro (*Harry Tuttle*), Michael Palin (*Jack Lint*), Kim Greist (*Jill Layton*), Katherine Helmond (*Ida Lowry*), Ian Holm (*Kurtzmann*), Bob Hoskins (*Spoor*). Directed by Terry Gilliam. Screenplay by Gilliam, Tom Stoppard, Charles McKeown, Special Effects Supervised by George Gibbs.

Alan Jones



Top: Sam Lowry, (a la *Blade Runner*?) in the neon jungle of Brazil. **Right:** Michael Palin as Lowry's friend of subtle menace, Jack Lint. **Far right:** Katherine Helmond as the young (looking) mother of Lowry. **Below right:** Mrs Ida Lowry undergoes extreme plastic surgery.

