

# Reviews

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## MAN BITES DOG

Director: Remmy Belvaux.

When I arrived at the cinema I really didn't know what to expect. I had read no reviews, seen no promotional clips, or even looked at a billboard poster. In hindsight I only wish I had! Any exposure to this film beforehand may have reduced my full blown coronary to a minor stroke! A Belgian serial killer – surely not?

Just when I thought all I had to do was avoid psychiatrists called Hannibal, as if from nowhere comes Benoit the Belgian baddie. Yes it appears society's perverse fascination with men who like to kill a lot has extended to Europe, and if audience figures are correct *Man Bites Dog* is certainly fascinating a lot of people.

Shot in 16mm black and white, the film takes the form of a mock documentary, following the exploits of, 'Ben' the serial killer. The film crew are an eager and attentive bunch who accompany Ben as he shows them around his home town. He invites them into the family home, introducing his friends, all of whom consider him a thoroughly nice bloke. All the while Ben is taking the opportunity to single-handedly reduce the entire population of Belgium! While conducting this rather bizarre guided tour Ben attempts to enlighten the audience as to his views on subjects as wide-ranging as the arts, music, immigration, the state of housing for the elderly, and the

consistency of cement used in the construction industry. (This latter point is apparently very important in the disposal of corpses). Disaster strikes when the film crew experience difficulty in financing the project. So enthusiastic is Ben to see the work completed he offers to finance the film himself. This apparently irrelevant gesture seems to inspire our, up until now, passive film crew as, after a night's heavy drinking, they indulge themselves a little too deeply in Ben's unpleasant activities. This culminates in a particularly explicit and disturbing scene in which a woman is violently gang-raped in full view of her lover.

It is hard to impress enough just how much graphic, and indiscriminate violence is portrayed in this film, but it is the humour displayed by Ben with his satirical wit and his clever commentary, that sets it apart from other movies of its genre. To say this film is not for the faint hearted is a profound understatement. The three Belgian students who co-wrote, produced, directed and starred in this, their debut film, leave the viewer with a sense of shock and outrage that stays in the conscious long after the film has ended. It may indeed be trying to get over a positive message - that our fascination with violence portrayed through the media is not a healthy one, but personally I found cinema came just a little too close to reality this time. Come back Hannibal Lecter, all is forgiven! ■

**Officer T. McPhillips,  
H.M.P. Woodhill.**

## Criminal Records

**10,000 offences per 100,000 population recorded in 1991, 78% more than in 1981.**

**Average prison population in 1992 was 45,817.**

**16% of sentenced prisoners were black including 26% of women prisoners.**

**60% of sentenced prisoners on 30 June 1992 were in for offences other than violent and sexual offences.**