

# PAUL THOMAS ANDERSON



## ON SCREEN

Week One

## Welcome to *Paul Thomas Anderson on Screen*

### Week One

Paul Thomas Anderson, I am fond of saying, is one of the few filmmakers currently working who – and I shall prepare for some weirdly organised backlash from people who don't like thread or blood – does not have a notable misfire in his filmography.

Ten features, preceded by a proof-of-concept short, that have all – to greater or lesser degrees been critically acclaimed and some of which have been adjudged stone-cold classics.

He directs actors to career-best performances, he has grown increasingly ambitious, he changes up style, period and genre and, as we've seen with the reaction to *One Battle After Another*, he retains that old-fashioned ability to make a film an event.

Over the next ten weeks, we'll be looking at each of the films in depth, beginning with 1996's *Hard Eight*, along with a rare chance to see in full the short that preceded it, *Cigarettes & Coffee*.

Anderson came of cinematic age in one of the cyclical moments in cinema history where a new crop of young filmmakers with new ideas are allowed to come and play in the sandbox. (Usually, because a handful of them have made a studio some money.) Tarantino and Linklater are contemporaries, for instance.

In *Hard Eight*, however, Anderson manages to create a unique voice that is not always as flashy (this wouldn't last, not in every film) as some of his peers and which hinted at a depth he would go on to exploit in rare fashion in his later career.

It's neo-noir, but it's also unmistakably the work of a new voice. Because, at their core, Anderson's films are about people and the brilliant, terrible, amazing and shocking things they do to one another.

## **FILM WEEK ONE**

Cigarettes & Coffee (1993)

Hard Eight (1996)