

meaning to him – except as a way to support his family – and was shut out of his true love, acting. Something in his brain said, “Rob a bank,” which he did. The flush of success compared favorably to the adrenaline rushes he experienced in combat, thus sealing his fate as a gangster. Meanwhile, the media exploited his bravado – and that of fellow gang members after his first escape from prison – and that only served to get him higher. By adding some rockabilly tunes to the soundtrack, Morlando sets Boyd up to be Canada’s first rock-’n’-roll criminal, which may be wishful thinking on his part.

The so-called existential angst Boyd was experiencing – combined with survivor’s guilt – was a common malady among WWII veterans and maybe always has been. It’s been attributed to the genesis of the Hell’s Angels and similarly rowdy gangs in the UK. In Jean-Francois Richet’s “Mesrine” couplet, the protagonist had returned from the Algerian war for independence damaged from what he saw. The robber we met in Michele Placido’s “Angel of Evil” had no such excuse, but likely was motivated by boredom and his status as the bastard child of a Milanese businessman. His first known job was freeing a tiger from a circus at age 8. By comparison to these guys and John Dillinger, Boyd’s a saint. This fact doesn’t diminish the quality of “Citizen Gangster,” which is a perfectly acceptable freshman effort. Scott Speedman is good as the bank robber, as are Jessica Chastain look-alike Kelly Reilly as his beleaguered wife; Brian Cox, as his self-righteous policeman father; and Kevin Durand and Brendan Fletcher as his mates. Lorne Greene (a.k.a., Ben Cartwright) makes a posthumous cameo as narrator on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation’s first newscast. The DVD adds interviews and background material.

Bank robbers and PTSS also figure in Neil Mackay’s first psycho-horror feature, “**Battleground**” (a.k.a., “Skeleton Lake”). Here, a half-dozen gang members are forced to lay low for 24 hours after stealing \$3.2 million from a bank in northern Michigan. If successful, a plane will arrive to whisk them to Canada. Their first mistake is to pick as their hideout a forest that a deranged Vietnam vet, the Hunter (Hugh Lambe), has staked out for his own purposes. Having learned a thing or two from the VC, the Hunter uses guerrilla tactics to pick off the crooks one by one. Apparently, he also is a fan of Buffalo Bill, in “Silence of the Lambs,” because he also enjoys skinning his victims. Rather than sit back and wait to be exterminated, the heavily armed robbers decide to play the Hunter’s game as long as possible. Considering its indie budget, “Battleground” succeeds pretty well as a then-there-were-none thriller. The weakest link is a buxom blond, whose boyfriend was killed a day earlier and expends a lot of energy screaming. – *Gary Dretzka*

Let Go

This light-as-feathers dramedy from freshman writer/director/producer Brian Jett tells the stories of three recent parolees, struggling to make it in a world that has no room for them. They share the same parole officer, Walter Dishman (David Denman), whose melancholy mood fits the job to a tee. “**Let Go**” is weighted down by all of the faults associated with one-man-band filmmakers, including an only sporadically humorous or meaningful script and wildly uneven pacing. Ed Asner plays a grumpy geezer, who’s trying to get the old, really old gang together for some heists; blond beauty Gillian Jacobs (Britta, on “Community”) uses her wiles to get her things she hasn’t earned; and comedian Kevin Hart, who’s required to take part-time jobs that would drive lesser men to suicide. They do their best to keep “Let Go” afloat, but Walter is too maudlin a character to hold things together. – *Gary Dretzka*

Free Havana

Nate & Margaret

On paper, at least, people in Cuba’s LGBT community have enjoyed greater personal liberties and acceptance since laws restricting homosexual activity began to be relaxed in the 1970s. The changes, which have taken hold gradually, seemingly can be overridden on whim, however, especially those pertaining to transsexuals and effeminate men. Like their Republican counterparts in the United States, Cuban officials have historically and adamantly been opposed to legalizing marriage between same-sex couples. In Eliezar Perez Angueira’s poignant documentary, “**Free Havana**,” six Havana residents describe what it’s been like to be gay and Cuban during the bad and not-so-bad days. Before laws were liberalized in 1979, males recognized as being homosexual could be sent to work camps, hospitalized, imprisoned and barred from certain jobs. Many were forcibly deported in the Mariel boatlift. It wasn’t until recently that straight Cubans began to change their basically hostile attitude towards gays and lesbians. It’s also worth noting that sexual-reassignment surgery is covered under universal health care and transsexuals can marry.

In 2010, Fidel Castro apologized for the mistreatment and injustices directed at LGBT Cubans during his regime, blaming it on negative attitudes cultivated during the previous government. Still, the stories are undeniably sad and some of the people interviewed insisted on having their faces shaded, because they weren’t certain things wouldn’t change again, overnight. Apart from the work camps, though, Angueira could have found thousands of American gays, lesbians and transsexuals from the pre-Stonewall era who could relate stories as bad or worse than these six subjects. And, in many places here, attitudes towards homosexuals have gotten progressively more hostile in the face of a Supreme Court ruling that could legalize same-sex marriage. The DVD adds an interview with the director.

The title characters in Nathan Adloff’s observant indie dramedy “**Nate & Margaret**” are best pals, despite the fact they’re three decades in age removed from each other. When we’re introduced to them, they’re at very different places in their cycle of life, although one of them won’t admit it. Nate (Tyler Ross) is a 19-year-film student, who, for the first time in his life, is experiencing something resembling love. That it’s with another young man is almost incidental to the movie’s plot. Margaret (Natalie West) is a waitress at a Chicago restaurant and, at 52, an aspiring standup comedian. She isn’t very funny, but she’s real ... almost too real. Just when James (Conor McCahill) has turned on Nate’s love light, Margaret begins to wonder if she can muster amorous feelings for any man, especially the one who’s begun to take an interest in her career. When Nate begins behaving inconsiderately toward his best pal, as anyone might in the first blush of love, their friendship unravels and she begins to grow older before our eyes. Former child star Gaby Hoffman (“Uncle Buck,” “Field of Dreams”) also has a prominent role in the story, but her character is poorly defined. “Nate & Margaret” clearly is a first effort, with all that implies, but Adloff’s got a good eye for people and isn’t afraid to put them in awkward situations. If only he’d given Margaret better material and a makeover, her transformation would be a lot easier to buy. – *Gary Dretzka*

Mitch Ryder: Live at Rockpalast

Graham Parker: Live at Rockpalast

I think it’s safe to say **Mitch Ryder & the Detroit Wheels** influenced more garage-band musicians in the 1960s than any other act. Here was a white singer who could hold his own with the black R&B artists who were first responsible for the songs in his playlist and a band that compared favorably to those backing the soul superstars in Memphis, Philadelphia and the Motor City. Unlike other rock ensembles of the period, the music they made was intended to be danced to, not merely admired from afar while screaming your lungs out or tripping on acid. A staple of AM rock stations, even during the British invasion, Ryder sold a lot of 45s and albums, but made too many enemies in the industry to be allotted his rightful place in the Hall of Fame. After taking some time off to nurse an aching throat and sit out various trends, Ryder hit the road again in the ’90, when everything old began to sound good again. The concerts included in the “Rockpalast” two-disc DVD find Ryder in near-top form, both in 1979 and 2004. In addition to his greatest hits, Ryder covers songs by Bob Dylan, the Rolling Stones, Velvet Underground, Doors, Jimi Hendrix and Edwin Starr.

Graham Parker and the Rumour had the great misfortune to launch his career at a time when several different trends began to converge on each other, none of them being blue-eyed soul. In hindsight, though, the band’s first two albums hold up as well as any music from the late-1970s. Like the Detroit Wheels, the Rumour was powered by a dynamic horn section and some of England’s top session musicians. The concerts, from 1978 and 1980, represent the band at its prime. Among the songs included in the two-disc DVD are “White Honey,” “Back to Schooldays,” “Don’t Ask Me Questions,” “Soul Shoes” and “Howlin’ Wind.” Look for an appearance on piano by the legendary sideman Nicky Hopkins at the 1980 gig. There’s no need to point out that Ryder and Parker gave the “Rockpalast” audiences what they paid to see and hear. – *Gary Dretzka*

Starship Troopers: Invasion