January 29
Children of Men
Alfonso Cuaron, 2006, 114 min

In a violently partisan country, a nationalist government criminalizes and interns refugees, while the threat of a global environmental catastrophe looms. Sound familiar? Cuaron’s 2006 film is timely sci-fi thriller set in the near future after women across the world have become infertile. Interplanetary chaos spares only one country—England. There, a cynical re-activist turned bureaucrat is suddenly charged with helping Kee, an African refugee who is miraculously pregnant, through a maze of competing political factions bent on using the child to their own advantage. Realized with a perceptive attention to detail, this treatise on how people might behave if there were no longer a future to believe in, postulates the effects of unchecked capitalism and environmental destruction.

February 5
Pillow Talk
Michael Gordon, 1959, 102 min

A blockbuster hit in 1959, this genre-defining romantic comedy has become the ur-text for mid-century American attitudes towards gender and sexuality. Womanning playboy Brad Allen (Rock Hudson) shares a phone line with interior decorator Jan Morrow (Doris Day) and sets out to win her over by embodying the role of a naive Texas rancher. Brimming with campy double entendres, eyebrow raising sexism, and scenes of Hudson’s own gay marquiseur (a gay man, pretending to be a straight man, pretending to be a gay man), Pillow Talk is both good fun and a reminder of the repressive roles promulgated by mainstream Hollywood cinema. Featuring scene-stealing supporting performances from Thelma Ritter and Tony Randall.

February 12
Brick
Rian Johnson, 2005, 119 min

Reconstituting a hard-boiled detective film-noir in a high school setting, Rian Johnson’s directorial debut offers a remarkable hybridity of genres. A film observing the similarities between the heartthrob and the femme fatale, the hallway bully and gangster heavy, the anti-hero and school prefect, Brick contravenes generic categorization with delectably subversive double-entendres, eyebrow raising sexism, and scenes of Hudson’s own gay marquiseur (a gay man, pretending to be a straight man, pretending to be a gay man). Brick continues specific categorization with distinctly entertaining comic insight.

February 19
Blue Velvet
David Lynch, 1986, 128 min

During a 1987 screening of Blue Velvet in Chicago—a man fainted. After his paramedic was checked, he walked back into the theater to see the ending. One of the most debated films of the 1980s, Blue Velvet was received with equal parts exhilaration and repulsion. Beginning as a gritty police drama, set during a garbage strike in 1970s Glasgow (a city with some of the poorest housing conditions in Western Europe), the film unravels through the eyes of children who amicably wander a poor council estate as they navigate (and are shaped by) the harsh conditions surrounding them. Envisaged through the subjectivity of the main character, a pre-adolescent boy named James, the estate vibrates with desperation and a haunting beauty. A bleak but stunning coming-of-age film, Ratcatcher announced one of the major new voices in cinema.

March 5
Abounaddara: The Right to the Image
Lynee Ramasy, 1996, 94 min

Lynee Ramasy’s directorial debut reinvigorated British social realism with a poetic style, striking intimacy, and sharply beautiful cinematography. Set during a garbage strike in 1970s Glasgow (a city with some of the poorest housing conditions in Western Europe), the film unravels through the eyes of children who amicably wander a poor council estate as they navigate (and are shaped by) the harsh conditions surrounding them. Envisaged through the subjectivity of the main character, a pre-adolescent boy named James, the estate vibrates with desperation and a haunting beauty. A bleak but stunning coming-of-age film, Ratcatcher announced one of the major new voices in cinema.

March 26
The Sea in Their Blood
Peter Greenaway, 1981, 27 min

Preceded by: 350 MYA
Territory
Eleanor Worthington, 2015, 17 min

Place and geography are examined in these three documentaries, which probe the oppositions between the present and deep time, urbanization and the undomesticated vestiges living alongside it, and the desire to know all in a world filled with contingency and chaos. Terra Long’s exquisite 350 MYA observes the long disappeared Rhei Ocean through the sand dunes of Morocco’s Sahara Desert. Eleanor Worthington presents a tragicomic portrait of Macaque monkeys wreaking havoc across the streets of Gibraltar in Territory. In Peter Greenaway’s rarely seen gem, the Sea in Their Blood, the relationship between the English and the water surrounding them is detailed by a narrator who at first appears to be a fantastically well of knowledge, but who may not be reliable.