



Bullet-scarred outdoor cinema at the Palace of Culture in Karte Char, Kabul | SIMON NORFOLK

A FEAST OF SKELETONS

Cinema's ongoing love affair with its own demise

IAN FRANCIS

Quinlan: Come on, read my future for me.

Tanya: You haven't got any.

Quinlan: What do you mean?

Tanya: Your future is all used up.

—*Touch of Evil* (Orson Welles, 1958)

My guess is that the final disappearance of cinemas will take place around the year 2020.

—Jean-Pierre Melville, 1971¹

Traditionally, anti-piracy campaigns have played on our sense of guilt by likening illegal downloads to car theft, or by revealing the shadowy web that links the sale of bootleg DVDs with international terrorism. Perhaps registering that this finger-pointing approach was misdirected – when those watching have more than likely paid for their ticket – the copyright lobby has adopted a change of tack in recent ads,

FEATURING

Faded phantoms

Magic lanterns

Hoarders

*A Hitchcock
doppelgänger*

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1 Rui Nogueira ed. and trans., *Melville on Melville* (Viking Press, 1971), p.167.