

BOOKS & DVD/BLU-RAY

By Alex Gordon

WIN Send your competition answers to Alex Gordon, The Evening Telegraph, 57 Priestgate, Peterborough PE1 1JW

THE BOMBER By Liza Marklund (Corgi £6.99)

THE Bomber, by acclaimed Swedish author Liza Marklund, manages somehow to be both a conventional and highly unconventional crime thriller.

It's conventional in that a journalist covering a big story (the bombing of an Olympic venue that kills a high profile victim) inevitably becomes part of the story, leading to a you-won't-be-able-to-turn-the-pages-fast-enough climax.

It's unconventional in that it not only has a woman leading the story, but it also reflects the real experiences of working women – the constant juggling of childcare and work, the strain on relationships, the bitching from some female colleagues and backstabbing from some male ones.

The Bomber is as much about sexism and inequality as it is about the hunt for the killer – and that isn't a criticism. The best crime and thriller stories address wider issues than just whodunnit, and it's easy to see why Marklund is a hit both at home and abroad.

She plunges you completely into the world she's created – a world of snow and ice, newsprint and testosterone, loyalty and hypocrisy. Crime reporter Annika Bengtzon may not always be likeable, but she is always totally believable and as you turn the final pages you will be rooting for her with every fibre of your being.

If The Killing's Sarah Lund appealed to you, then Annika Bengtzon should be right up your street too. Even if she doesn't have that jumper to keep her warm.

Review by Joanna Franks

WIN IT

Name the capital city of Sweden. Send your entries to Alex Gordon, Bomber competition by Thursday, December 1.

MICRO By Michael Crichton (Harper Collins £18.99)

THE creator of Jurassic Park left this book partly written when he died, but luckily acclaimed science writer Richard Preston was parachuted in to finish a brilliantly cinematic thriller that has all of Crichton's flare with techno twists. A shady scientific conglomerate has developed a mind-boggling shrinking technology and when a group of graduate students are zapped, they become tiny creatures faced with gigantic insects and other perils in the Hawaiian rainforest. A future Hollywood blockbuster for sure.

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THE REDEEMED By M.R. Hall (Pan £7.99)

HE has created a brilliantly complex and fascinating character in Severn Vale District Coroner Jenny Cooper, a British rival to Cornwell's Kay Scarpetta and Kathy Reichs' Temp Brennan. First, a dead man is found in an overgrown Bristol cemetery with the sign of cross gouged into his flesh. Then a young priest implores Cooper to hold an inquest into the death of Eva Donaldson, a political campaigner. There's a link between the two deaths which leads Jenny into dark and dangerous waters in this cracking third book.

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THE HARBOUR GIRL By Val Wood (Bantam Press £18.99)

ANOTHER enthralling story set in Scarborough in the 1980s from the romantic best-seller. Saga fans will love Jeannie Marshall, whose father sails a fishing boat while her mother mends nets and guts herring. Jeannie always imagined she'd marry dependable local lad Ethan, but ends up pregnant by a feckless stranger and flees to Hull where she has to battle tragedy and poverty, while clinging to her dreams.

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COME ON EILEEN (High Fliers, cert 15, £12.99)

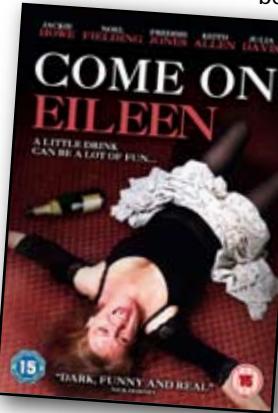
Glass half-empty



THIS isn't so much just a throwback to those gritty British kitchen sink dramas of the 60s, as an eye-opening insight into people who slide right down the plughole of society.

It's raw, dark, bleak, and sometimes humorous, as writer-director Finola Geraghty tries to capture a little of the social insight brought to film by the likes of Mike Leigh and Ken Loach, but it has perhaps too much shade and not enough light, to make it an enjoyable experience. It winds up being a warning that hitting the bottle is just going to leave you with a headache and no solution to your problems.

Eileen (Jackie Howe) is somebody you could meet in any one of Britain's sprawling sink estates. She's a forty-something single parent, looking after her senile father and struggling to bring up teenage son Jimmy (Felix Malcolm Still) who's sitting his GCSEs but is more into music than study, and daughter Gypsy (Mercedes Grower) with whom she has a tempestuous relationship. Much of the trouble



between mother and daughter stems from the fact that Eileen refuses to tell Gypsy the identity of her father, who apparently committed suicide before she was born. It was obviously all too much for Eileen's husband Martin (a cameo role for Keith Allen) from whom she's separated.

Eileen is also an alcoholic whose vow to give up the booze goes out the window when she takes up with pot-smoking Bill (Stephen Taylor) whom she meets at the cricket club where she works. She's desperate to make a good impression on Bill, but one

thing leads to another when she has a few drinks one day and steps back on the long slippery slope to self-destruction and the break-up of her family. It's hardly a laugh-a-minute, but if you fancy a no-frills drama without high-budget gloss, it's the film for you.

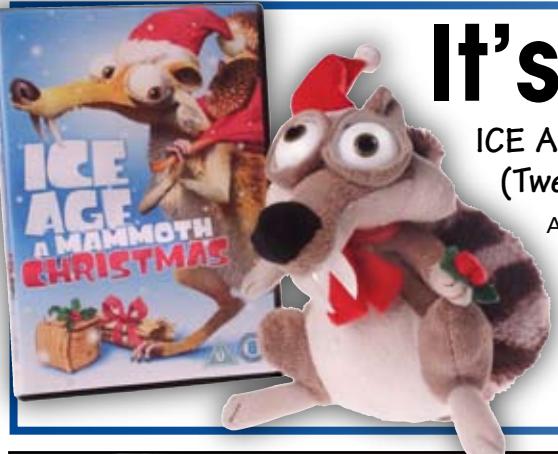
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WIN IT

Name a gritty British film hit of the 60s. Entries to Alex Gordon, Eileen competition, by Thursday, December 1.

It's fury funny

ICE AGE: A MAMMOTH CHRISTMAS (Twentieth Century Fox, cert U, £5)



A BARGAIN stocking filler to keep the nippers happy until Ice Age 4: Continental Drift hits cin-

emas, and there's a sneak preview here. All the loveable sub-zero heroes like Sid, Manny, Crash, Eddie, Diego and Ellie, star in this release that's exclusively available at Asda. Trouble begins when Sid accidentally destroys Manny's heirloom Christmas rock and ends up on

WIN IT

Name the cuddly toy character in this Ice Age picture. Entries to Alex Gordon, Ice Age competition.

Santa's naughty list. To try and put things right, he leads a hilarious quest to the North Pole but makes everything worse. You could win my copy of the film or a cuddly Ice Age toy.

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Vet's vengeance

THE EXTERMINATOR (Arrow, cert 18, Blu-ray £24.99)

ATOUGH action classic from 1980 that was the template for all the vigilante films that followed from Charles Bronson's Death Wish to the recent Rutger Hauer blast Hobo With A Shotgun. Flinty-eyed Robert Ginty plays Vietnam vet John Eastland who comes home to a tough New York neighbourhood, happy to be back with his loving family. But, when a former army buddy is left paralysed after a vicious attack by one of the local street gangs, Eastland snaps and takes up arms.

Other new releases

THE BEST OF RUDE TUBE (Acorn, cert 15, £19.99)

TV funny man Alex Zane fronts the wild, wacky, world of internet phenomenons as the hit series comes to DVD in time to delight fans for Christmas. Zane shares his favourite animal antics, freaky skills, total fails, and cyber celebrities in more than 100 side-splitting clips from the general public, including some never seen on television. So sit back and prepare howl without having to trawl the net to find the best bits. Sure to make you laugh are Mishka the Talking Dog, Geordie Pants man, The Real Kung Fu Panda and Angry Grandpa.

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DEADLY BLESSING (Arrow, cert 15, £15.99)

SHORTLY before director Wes Craven gave us the shudders with Nightmare On Elm Street, he made this creepy 1981 chiller with Sharon Stone playing Lana, a college friend who comes to a strange backwoods communities to comfort a friend called Martha whose husband Jim has died in mysterious circumstances. Martha is an outsider. Jim married despite the cult's objections, now it's clear there's a killer in this closed community led by veteran Ernest Borgnine as the fire-and-brimstone patriarch. It has Craven's icy fingerprints all over it!



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Name the first Rambo film. Entries to Alex Gordon, Exterminator competition.

Name an internet video sensation. Entries to Alex Gordon, Rude Tube competition.

Which sexy thriller made Sharon a star? Entries to Alex Gordon, Blessing competition.