

with her friends – in a bra and underpants.”

Her first film is *Best Buds*, a female stoner buddy comedy, due next year. In the meantime, go and see *Bridesmaids*, whether you're male or female – it's funny. And there's an air-drumming moment that is simultaneously so boys-gang and so girl-group that you might wonder for a fleeting moment if we're really so different after all. Imagine that, Hollywood. **JAMES MEDD**

BRIDESMAIDS and *BAD TEACHER* are in cinemas from 15 June. *YOUR HIGHNESS* is on DVD in August

RIPO MOURNING

GLORY *Jim Morrison's grave has a guard to protect it. But what does he mean to the faithful who weren't born when he died 40 years ago?*

THE 14TH ARRONDISSEMENT in Paris is home to the flat, open avenues of Montparnasse cemetery, the permanent address of some of the intellectual and artistic elite. The grid-style layout allows an easy stroll to



locate the graves of Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir (buried together), Charles Baudelaire, Eugene Ionesco, Serge Gainsbourg, Samuel Beckett and Man Ray, and all are adorned with a peculiar mix of tokens and mementoes.

What Serge Gainsbourg would make of the cauliflower on his plot is a matter for conjecture, though the cigarette lighters would doubtless be appreciated. Among the photos, notes, candles and coins, metro tickets are a recurring theme, indicating the bearer has journeyed to visit the grave. Destined for eventual removal either by the cemetery staff or the elements, all that will

remain are the lipstick kisses on their headstone.

Over in the 20th arrondissement, the 109 labyrinthine acres of the prestigious Père Lachaise cemetery also provide repose for the famous – and infamous – departed. Its cobbled and hilly avenues, monuments and trees can turn a grave visit into an expedition and requires the aid of a map. A roll-call of the interred includes Georges Seurat, Abelard, Heloise, Chopin, Edith Piaf, Gertrude Stein and Oscar Wilde. But its main attraction, the city's most visited burial site, has its own permanent guard. Arrows chalked on paths and signs on trees read: “JIM'S GRAVE – THIS WAY”.

The grave in question is surprisingly plain (there used to be a bust, later graffitied and stolen), the inscription bearing the name James Douglas Morrison, year of birth and death, and the Greek words “Kata Ton Daimona Eaytoy” mean “true to his own spirit”, a fitting epitaph for the frontman of The Doors. The circumstances of Jim Morrison's death have always been widely debated and this July's 40th anniversary turns the searchlight on a new round of speculation. It was originally reported that he died from alcohol-induced heart failure in the flat he shared with girlfriend Pam Courson but a new theory now centres on his visit to a nightclub where he apparently snorted a lethal overdose of heroin (a hatred of needles meant he never injected). His death was allegedly covered up to avoid repercussions for the nightclub and the body was quickly returned to the flat where Courson claimed to find him



Jim Morrison's grave on 3 July '91, the 20th anniversary of his death. A riot squad arrived later; (left) the gift-strewn Parisian plot today.

dead in the bath in the early hours of 3 July. She would make several contradictory statements about that night's events until her own death three years later.

Undeterred by the crowd-control barriers, the faithful appear all year round to cover the plot with beer cans, sketches, love notes, whisky bottles (*Alabama Song*) and the obligatory metro tickets and coins. Two cleaning ladies are gainfully employed removing the “debris” twice a day, paid for – as is the guard – by the Morrison estate to mollify the somewhat testy folk at the Mairie who are far from fond of their big draw. A phone

There was a graveside riot on the 20th anniversary in '91. The Doors movie was just out and several thousand fans arrived from the collapsed USSR

call to enquire about the grave, its guard or anything connected with the late rock star provokes a surly, “Ah, Morrison – non!” A Gallic shrug of disinterest hums down the wire.

The big anniversaries provide another headache, especially the 20th in 1991, which degenerated into a riot with the CRS (riot squad) deployed to break up the gathering of thousands. Oliver Stone's film *The Doors* had been released early in 1991, reigniting interest in the band (especially Morrison) and leading to a

number of new publications about him, the band and their era. And the recent collapse of the Soviet Union meant that several thousand Eastern European fans made the journey for the first time, swelling the crowd. The police couldn't cope and, astonishingly, resorted to the use of tear gas.

But what's Morrison's enduring appeal? The Doors' handsome Byronic singer seems to tick every box. A poster boy for a now over-romanticised counterculture. A voice of dissent who actively courted controversy (he even had a conviction for indecent exposure, overturned in 2010). A poet, philosopher and intellectual inspired by Nietzsche, the Beat poets and the French existentialists. His aim was to “deliver people from the limited ways in which they see and feel”, the band's name, of course, a homage to William Blake – “When the doors of perception are cleansed every thing will appear to man as it is: infinite.” Little wonder that his constituency is renewed every year by fresh generations of teenage girls, pinning love notes to the chiselled, deathless 27-year-old sage and prophet too beautiful for this world.

On a recent visit to Paris I talked to a guard at the grave, Claudine. “I think it's a shame that some of the young kids come here just because it's a hip place to be,” she told me. “They don't really know what Jim represented or anything about his music.” **BARBARA HOPKINS**

REX, TREVOR HOPKINS