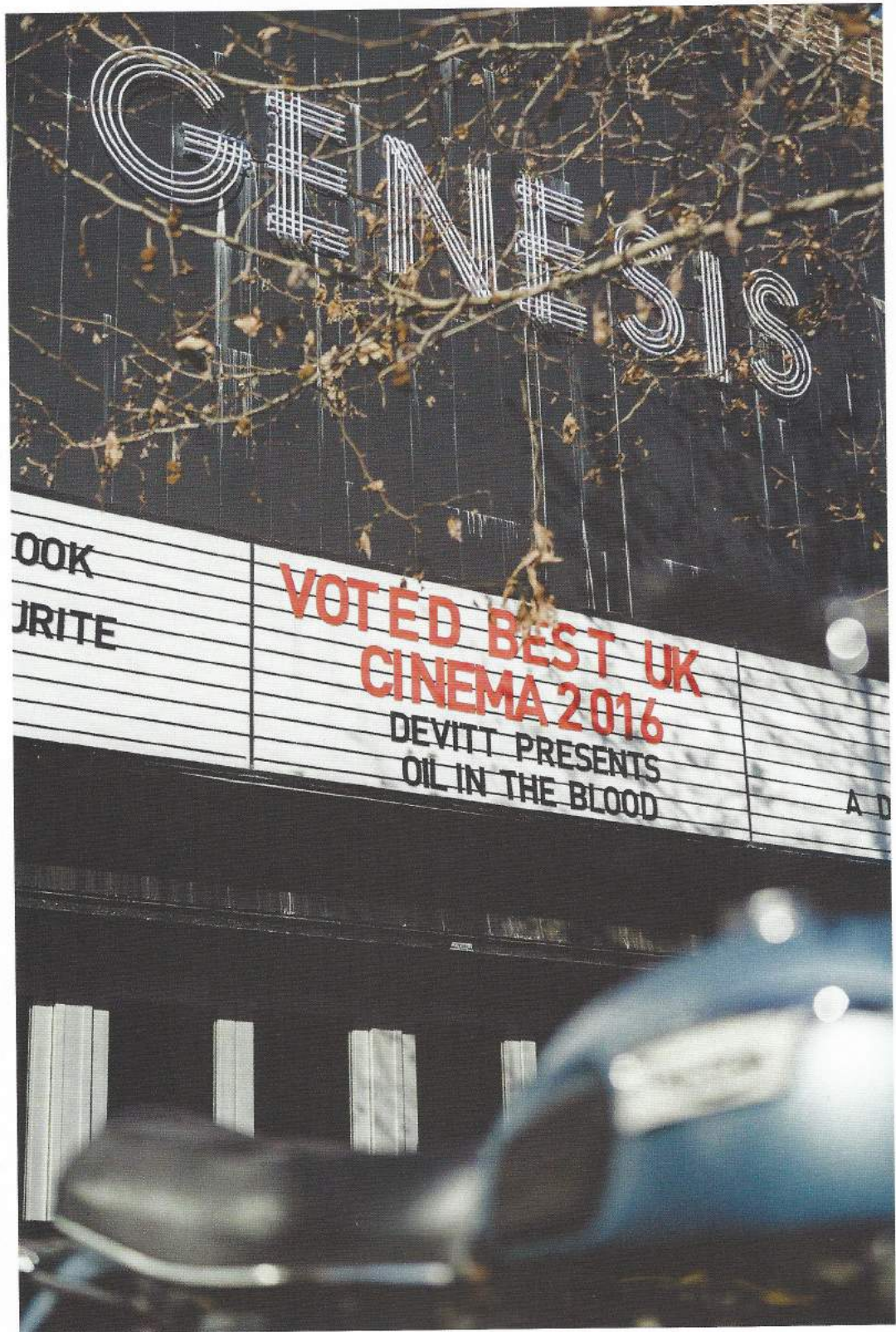




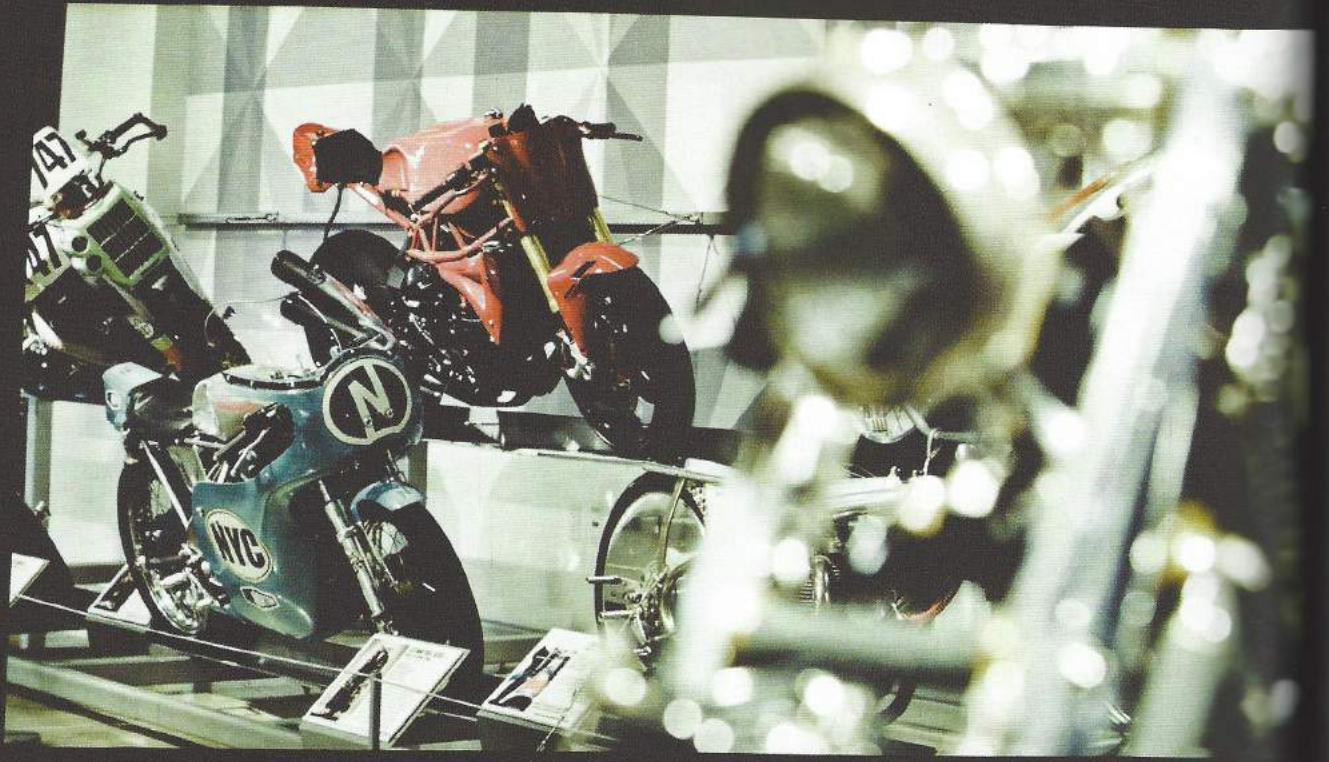
# OIL IN THE BLOOD

THREE YEARS IN THE MAKING, THIS NEW  
FILM ABOUT THE CUSTOM SCENE SHOULD BE  
FANTASTIC. BUT IS IT? TOM BING DECIDES











Not your usual  
Showcase crowd.  
Screening was  
warmly received



**T**here are passion projects and then there are those life-changing-ditch-everything-and-pour-your-bank-account-into-something passion projects. Long-time film director Gareth Maxwell Roberts obviously got struck pretty hard by the emerging custom bike scene and has spent the past three years meeting, questioning and documenting some of the most influential characters behind the movement for his passion project.

The result is an interesting view on the scene in the UK, USA and beyond. Gareth and his team's meticulous approach has left few stones unturned – *Oil in the Blood* has a clever way of broadcasting a range of sometimes harmonious, sometimes jarring opinions without the film itself ever expressing an opinion either way. Interviews touch on corporate appropriation of the scene, female representation, the future of electric bikes, manufacturers' involvement in customisation and the all-important debate of form vs function.

It's interesting to hear the opinions of influential characters such as Roland Sands, Maxwell Hazan, Bike Exif, The Vintagent, Thor Drake, Shinya Kimura and Ola Stenegard. There is no shared ideal, no entirely common standpoint – it's clear this is a world of individuals.

*El Solitario* steal the cinematography. Their desert trip on Harley scramblers gets me dreaming about riding in Morocco with friends, camping out, huddling round the fire and discovering other-worldly landscapes. I'd rather do it on a light single-cylinder than a behemoth V-twin but that's not in the spirit of things.

Which brings me to my first criticism of the film. For many, motorcycles beguile us because of the places they can take us, the friends we can make, the adventures we can have on them. I was dying to see more about what the bikes in the film are used for, beyond getting nice photos for magazines, Instagram accounts and attracting a huddle at bike shows. It sometimes felt hollow.

And – contrary to what the film implies – motorcycle customisation was happening for years before the current scene, with track bikes, road bikes, rally bikes, dirt trackers, adventure bikes, scooters, mopeds and anything else with two wheels.

With those regrets aside, as a vignette of our world, a snapshot of our scene, *Oil in the Blood* is an important work. And to put your hands up and say a project this is finished must be a real challenge in an ever-changing, ever-evolving world. The scene is relentless. Amazing builds hit social media daily and disappear with the appearance of the next one. Ground breaking shows like the Bike Shed, The One Show, Mama Tried, Brooklyn Invitational, Wheels and Waves, Mooneyes and Handbuilt provide a global showcase.

Very few people really need a motorcycle, and of those who do, a scooter would probably make more sense. So it's great that *Oil in the Blood* celebrates this disjointed community interested in art, design, engineering and going fast.



[imdb.com/title/tt4710502/](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4710502/)