KINONIK

MIAMI BLUES (1990)

Directed by George Armitrage

WEDNESDAY September 2nd 7PM

SATURDAY September 5th 2PM / 7PM



For nine days this August, an entrepreneur going by “Cyberleek” dripped stolen footage of the year's most anticipated video game onto the internet, one clip at a time. Each leak carried a QR code and the ticker for a cryptocurrency they’d minted for the occasion. Buy the coin, they suggested, and more leaks would follow. They wrapped the enterprise in a manifesto about corporate greed and the death of physical media. Then, hours before the studio's big tickertape reveal, they sold their entire position for a quarter of a million dollars, the coin cratered, and they vanished.

We are, of course, living in the golden age of such grifts. Cyberleek didn't invent it, they were simply aping the national style at modest scale: when the head of state runs a series of rug pulls from the Resolute Desk, marching to his drumbeat is just showing initiative.

Alec Baldwin's Junior Frenger, in his first leading role, is a man who understands that in America a role is as good as a self. He steals Fred Ward’s gun and badge and then simply becomes a cop — fighting crime, shaking down dealers, playing house with Jennifer Jason Leigh in a rented bungalow of Jiffy Pop domesticity. Junior’s discovered that pretending is the only game anyone is playing, and the rules are made of Swiss cheese when you’re the main character.

Which brings us to what Cyberleek actually stole: Grand Theft Auto VI, the most lucrative entertainment property of the century. The series has always been sharp social commentary downstream from films like Falling Down, Repo Man, Something Wild... the whole strain of sunburned American black comedy where the joke is that the country itself is the crime scene. The games invite you to enjoy taking whatever isn't nailed down, and the enjoyment is the indictment. Which is to say: not unlike **Miami Blues.**

George Armitage got there in 1990, thirteen years before the first game. He makes you like Junior despite his awfulness, and then declines to tell you how to feel about it. The film never adjudicates. It just lets Baldwin radiate (boy howdy does he radiate) and leaves you holding your own delight — and that delight is the whole enchilada: comedy and violence in the same microwave entrée, each bite an absolutely delicious and prescient satire.