

GOING UNDERGROUND

Treatment

Format: Feature

Genre: Fantasy Comedy / Psychedelic Time-Slip Adventure

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Logline

Three sixty-year-old Edinburgh friends take a tourist trip beneath the Royal Mile and emerge in a vivid, heightened 1984 version of the city, where they meet their younger selves, plunge back into punk-and-goth nightlife, and get swept into a comic jewel chase involving bikers, police and a talking dog — only to discover that their wild return to youth may have taken place in the space of a single half-hour trip.

Overview

Going Underground is a comic time-slip fantasy with a strong psychedelic undertone, built around three older men being thrown back into the city, music and selves they thought they had left behind. At its most direct, it is an exuberant Edinburgh adventure: Danny Allbright, Peter Wright and Ricky Newman descend beneath the Royal Mile on a tourist excursion, drink a mysterious **Elixir 1328**, step through a blinding underground doorway, and emerge in a stylised 1984 where their dog Buddy can talk and everything feels brighter, faster, stranger and more alive. Underneath that premise, however, the film is also playing a subtler game. The attraction's name — **Living Scottish Discoveries** — points knowingly toward **LSD**, the men later smoke joints and drink mushroom wine, the 1984 world behaves with dreamlike elasticity, and the final reveal that only thirty minutes have passed reframes the entire story as either genuine magical time travel, a chemically heightened collective hallucination, or some gleeful hybrid of the two.

The title is central to the design. The men first go **underground** into the tunnels beneath Edinburgh where the time-slip begins. They then go **underground** again into the city's subcultural nightlife at **The Underground** club, throwing themselves back into punk, goth, music and youthful recklessness. Finally, their route home depends on returning underground via the **Scotland Street Tunnel**. But the title also works psychologically: the whole adventure takes the men below the surface of age, routine, marriage and physical decline into memory, instinct, buried desire and the selves they have spent decades keeping under control. What begins as a comic day out becomes a full descent into hidden life.

Just as importantly, the film is not aiming for sober period realism. Its 1984 is a **pop-cultural memoryscape** — part nostalgia, part hallucination, part comic fantasia. The Elephant House writer clearly echoes a young **J.K. Rowling**. The quasi-priestly biker convenor **Lenny** works as a comic reflection of **Lemmy**. **Buddy on a bicycle with the panda in the basket** openly parodies **E.T.** Even figures like **Dame Conceitayda Lott** are built as heightened, punning comic presences rather than naturalistic characters. The world is therefore shaped not just by memory, but by songs, films, celebrity ghosts, drugs and the way the past becomes bigger, weirder and more referential in recollection.

Tone and Style

The tone is playful, anarchic, nostalgic and progressively more breathless. The present-day material is grounded and affectionate — three old friends, their wives, a touristy Royal Mile, a slightly naff heritage attraction. The 1984 material is stylised into animated technicolour, alive with club culture, student chaos, punk style, biker absurdity and heightened visual logic. The film should feel like a comic descent into a city-sized bad idea that somehow becomes emotionally useful. Its humour comes from character truth as much as absurdity: older bodies in younger clothes, old anxieties inside surreal situations, and lifelong friends discovering that their younger selves are both exactly who they remember and not at all who they imagined.

Treatment

On a bright festival morning in present-day Edinburgh, three sixty-year-old friends — **Danny Allbright**, **Peter Wright** and **Ricky Newman** — walk the Royal Mile with their wives and Ricky's beagle, **Buddy**. Their dynamic is clear immediately. Danny is the most impulsive and restless, Peter the most anxious and physically careful, Ricky the warmest and most open to the idea of "an experience." Their wives split off to go shopping, leaving the men free to indulge in a tourist attraction Ricky has chosen: **Living Scottish Discoveries**, a tunnel-based slice of Edinburgh history down a close off the

Mile. The arrangement is simple: enjoy the tour and meet the wives back at **midday**. That noon rendezvous becomes the quiet ticking clock on the whole film.

Inside the attraction, an unnervingly old guide receives them in a dusty reception room dressed like he belongs to another era. He pours them each a dram from a bottle labelled **Elixir 1328**, hands them maps of the tunnels below, and explains that once they choose a path at the fork ahead, they cannot turn back. The warning sounds like heritage-tour theatre. The men accept it with mild amusement, down the whisky and descend. Buddy laps at some spilled liquid from the floor. Danny leaves his map behind. They joke about history, age, lungs, weak chests and dusty tunnels, still assuming the whole thing is just a quaint outing.

The underground passages are atmospheric but initially disappointing. At the fork they choose the left-hand route and eventually find a cavern cluttered with forgotten boxes and discarded old props. At the top of some steps stands a closed door. Danny opens it and a blinding white light engulfs the chamber. Despite Peter's nerves, the men step through — and emerge not back into the present but into a stylised, animated **1984 Edinburgh** on the Royal Mile. Festival banners proclaim the **1984 Edinburgh Festival**. Their surroundings are suddenly technicolour. Their mobile phones lose signal. Peter panics. Danny is exhilarated. Ricky tries to keep everyone calm. Then Buddy speaks. Matter-of-factly, dryly, impatiently — as if talking dogs are the least surprising thing about this new world. The trip has begun.

The men quickly realise the year means something very specific: in 1984 they were all **twenty-one**. Suddenly the impossible has become personal. They are not just in the past; they are in **their** past. When Buddy asks where they lived then, Ricky remembers the Southside student flat they all once shared. The suggestion hits them with irresistible force. If this really is 1984, then somewhere in the city their younger selves are still alive, still reckless, still living in the rooms where adulthood had not yet hardened into routine. The story's true emotional engine starts here: not survival, but the temptation to step back inside a lost version of themselves.

At the flat, they meet **Young Danny, Young Peter** and **Young Ricky**, still in the chaos of student life under the command of their eccentric landlady **Dame Conceitayda Lott**. The younger men are amused, suspicious and increasingly delighted by their visitors, particularly when the older trio tell them the truth: they are looking at their own future. The older men, in turn, are confronted with a comic and emotional shock. Peter sees that he was already a tidy worrier at twenty-one. Danny sees himself in full punk peacock mode. Ricky sees a version of himself completely open to drift, excitement and possibility. Their younger counterparts take the whole thing as another layer of student absurdity. Why not time travellers? Why not a talking dog? They invite the older men to stay. One night of nostalgia never hurt anyone.

That night becomes a plunge back into 1984 alternative culture. The older trio are restyled in punk and goth gear, exposed to old records, weed and mushroom wine, and taken out with the younger men and their girlfriends — **Angel, Beth** and **Eloise** — to **The Underground** club. The title of the film lands again. The men have gone underground literally into tunnels, and now they go underground culturally into the nightlife, music and subculture of their youth. In the club they are overwhelmed by the sensory assault of memory made real: smoke, leather, records, dancing, subcultural swagger, and the intoxicating sense that the body and spirit can still belong to this world. Peter's back seems to recover. Danny becomes euphoric. Ricky tries to enjoy the moment without surrendering entirely to it. Under the influence of mushroom wine, the film's visual language opens into vivid, kaleidoscopic hallucination. The older men end up crowd-surfing upside down above the dancefloor, grinning like boys. It is comic, ridiculous and touching at once.

Running alongside this nostalgia trip is a comic crime plot that begins elsewhere in the city. A ludicrous biker gang called **The Barbarians**, led by the melodramatic **Baba Fatt**, has stolen a cache of rubies known as the **Blood Stones** from a jewellery shop for the grand and sinister **Dame Conceitayda** of Rockville. The heist itself is bungled, and in trying to hide the jewels quickly Baba Fatt stuffs them into a scruffy stuffed panda toy lying among the gang's junk. Their terrifyingly tidy landlady **Mrs Tillyworth** then cleans the flat while they are out and throws the panda away. Later, as the club crowd spills into the street, Buddy digs through a pile of junk outside the bikers' tenement and retrieves the panda as a prize. Neither he nor the others know it contains the jewels. The whole comic machinery of the second half turns on that accident.

Morning brings consequences. The older men wake hungover, cramped and filthy after sharing a bed with Buddy and the flea-ridden panda. Their glamour is gone. Their make-up has smeared, their bodies are stiff, and the fantasy has started to look less sustainable. They head back to the portal point on the Royal Mile, hoping simply to reverse what happened and return home. Instead they find a Rastafarian in the smallest shop who studies the altered map and tells them the

route home has changed. Now the portal lies at the **Scotland Street Tunnel**, and it does not open until **midday tomorrow**. They are trapped in 1984 for another day. The old man's "trip" has just extended.

This second day shifts the story from intoxicated immersion to escalating farce. The men can no longer simply enjoy being young again. They must now survive the city, the bikers, the dog and the panda, while the 1984 world grows more chaotic and breathless around them. Buddy clings to the panda possessively, even when the younger men suggest binning it because it seems infested with fleas. Chasing him up **Arthur's Seat**, they watch in disbelief as he steals a bicycle and rides downhill with the panda in the basket, leaping through the air in a direct comic **E.T.** homage before charging off toward the Meadows. The film openly embraces that parody/homage register: 1984 here is not just recalled, but filtered through the cinema and pop culture of the time.

The city keeps turning into an obstacle course. At the **Elephant House**, Buddy wanders off and encounters a young woman struggling to write fantasy fiction, a clear comic caricature of **J.K. Rowling**. He encourages her to move somewhere cheap and warm and, with canine certainty, advises against writing magic stories and toward writing more like Jackie Collins. It is a throwaway gag, but an important one: it reveals that this version of 1984 Edinburgh is full of future-famous echoes and cultural ghosts, a memoryscape in which real-world associations drift through the adventure like half-remembered prophecy. In the biker world, this same logic produces **Lenny**, the church-hall convenor spreading the "Word of Zep," a priest-like comic echo of **Lemmy**, complete with mock-spiritual biker convention rhetoric. These caricatures are not stray jokes. They help define the film's whole register: heightened, referential, chemically lit from within.

Meanwhile Baba Fatt discovers the panda is missing, begs for time from the menacing Dame Conceitayda, and launches a city-wide retrieval operation. The bikers are helped by two skinheads, **Julius Featheringham** and **Imelia Middleton**, who have glimpsed the panda and want payment for their information. Their comic exchange with Baba Fatt slides knowingly through lines from "**I Heard It Through the Grapevine**," making explicit one of the film's more playful devices: songs do not merely accompany the world of *Going Underground*; they leak into its dialogue, humour and identity. Music is not decoration here. It is part of the language of the city and the joke structure of the film itself.

The chase engine reaches full speed at a football match. Trying to kill time before the tunnel opens, the group attend the **Edinburgh derby** at Easter Road. Buddy, wearing club colours and barely interested, wakes just in time to see the ball heading for goal and, obeying pure instinct, leaps onto the pitch to stop it. In one instant the whole stadium turns on them. The group run for their lives through the stands and into the street, pursued by a furious crowd of football supporters. This chase is both comic spectacle and structural acceleration. The deeper they get into 1984, the more the whole city becomes kinetic, breathless and impossible to control.

When they finally return to the student flat, hoping to regroup, they find it trashed and occupied by **Baba Fatt** and his gang, waiting for them. The confrontation is a superb comic inversion: the men came to revisit their youth and instead find themselves in a hostage negotiation over a stuffed panda. Buddy refuses to surrender the toy. Ricky eventually uses a lighter and the threat of burning the panda to force Baba Fatt to stand down and let them leave. The bikers' faux menace gives way to panic. The older and younger men, Buddy and the panda flee downstairs just ahead of a full retaliatory pursuit.

This triggers the film's most extravagant chase sequence. The group pile into **Eloise's red convertible**, with Young Ricky behind the wheel because, as he says, he has "done this before" — the joke being that all of this adolescent driving confidence now belongs to the older Ricky's memory of youthful recklessness. As they tear through Edinburgh, the bikers mount up behind them, police join the pursuit after a covert update from **Baba Noob**, and the city becomes an all-out comic battleground. At last Peter opens the panda and discovers the Blood Stones hidden inside. The full logic of the caper clicks into place. They are not merely being chased by maniacs; they are carrying the jewels from the headline heist. The adventure has become part time-slip, part psychedelic trip, part jewel-thief farce.

The climax heads toward the tunnel and toward decision. By now the men have had exactly what they thought they wanted: one more immersion in youth, music, chaos and possibility. But they have also rediscovered what youth really felt like — not just freedom, but instability, noise, danger, endless motion, and the inability to stop things once they gather speed. What they miss is not literally being young. It is the sense of aliveness that came with not yet being buried under habit. The city chase externalises that truth. 1984 is wonderful, but it is not sustainable. It is exhilarating, but it cannot be lived in forever. That is why the scramble back underground matters emotionally as much as structurally.

When the men finally return through the right tunnel and emerge back in the present, the film delivers its smartest and most elegant reveal. Danny, dazed and exhilarated, says, “**That was some trip.**” They look at the clock. It is **midday**. At the start of the story it was **11:30am**. Barely half an hour has passed. In real time, almost nothing has happened. In lived time, they have spent an entire odyssey below the city: drink, drugs, younger selves, old girlfriends, football riots, biker chases, police pursuit, stolen jewels, a talking dog, and the rediscovery of who they used to be. The fantasy remains intact, but now so does the psychedelic reading. The story ends where its title, premise and clues have always been pointing: underground not just as location, but as altered state, memory chamber and emotional excavation.

Themes

At its core, *Going Underground* is about **nostalgia as intoxication**. The men do not simply remember youth; they are plunged back into it as if under the influence of a powerful hallucinogen. The past becomes euphoric, seductive, ridiculous and impossible to sustain. The film’s drug references are not merely comic garnish. They are part of the emotional structure.

It is also about **friendship as a time machine**. The emotional heart of the film is not the portal or even the 1984 setting. It is the chemistry between Danny, Peter and Ricky. Before the tunnel, they are older men with routines. After it, they are briefly restored by being together in the mode they once shared. Their friendship itself becomes the mechanism by which the past lives again.

The film also explores **buried selves**. To go underground is to go below the surface of adulthood into whatever has been suppressed — risk, rebellion, style, appetite, possibility. The younger selves are not ghosts. They are dormant versions of the men who still exist somewhere under the managed surface of later life. The adventure gives them a way to encounter those buried selves directly.

Finally, *Going Underground* treats **memory as cultural remix**. The past is not remembered neutrally. It returns mixed with songs, movie images, celebrity echoes, punk style, football energy and comic exaggeration. That is why lyric riffs, celebrity caricatures, E.T. parody, and larger-than-life comic names all belong in the same film. Memory is already referential. The script simply turns that into form.

Closing Statement

Going Underground is a funny, heartfelt and formally playful fantasy comedy about what happens when three older men quite literally descend beneath the city and find the selves they thought they had left behind still alive underground. It works as time-slip adventure, psychedelic trip, pop-cultural memoryscape, musical comedy and comic chase film all at once. Most importantly, it earns its final ambiguity: after all the tunnels, clubs, drugs, songs, bikers, football fans, police, pandas and younger selves, the revelation that only thirty minutes have passed turns the whole film into one perfect question — was it magic, was it chemical, or was it simply the only way these men could remember how to feel alive again?