

Reel

BY BONNIE DATT

HOW DO YOU TOP A SEXY SQUAW (step aside, Jessica Rabbit) and a benippled bat (holy codpiece) for the fall lineup? You don't even try. You just roll out the latest round of action, romance, comedy, mystery and Brad Pitt movies. And thank God that Kato Kaelin isn't in any of them.



Desperado

Columbia Pictures

Robert Rodriguez started the indie fire burning with his \$7,000 *El Mariachi*. Now, with big-studio backing and big-name talent (Antonio Banderas plays the musician with the loaded guitar) for its sequel, he puts his tricks aside — or at least polishes them — and does some serious filmmaking.

To Die For

Columbia Pictures

Here's another from-tablets-to-celluloid picture, but with less blood than *Natural Born Killers* and less-offensive language than *S.F.W.* Nicole Kidman stars as an attention-crazed weather girl. Matt Dillon plays her murdered husband. Gus Van Sant directs, so yes, it'll be quirky.



Canadian Bacon

Gramercy

Roger & Me's Michael Moore lays off GM and goes after the White House with his scenario of what would happen if we declared war on Canada. And if Hawkeye Pierce were president. Not really, but Alan Alda does play the man with the plan. Rhea Perlman (*Cheers*) and the late John Candy also star.



Hackers

United Artists

This is a blood-and-guts horror flick that... No, it's about computers. But you knew that. In it, a bunch of Gen Xers (that means they're cool, not geeky — get it!) become cybersuspects in some technological treachery. They're looking for an exit off this superhighway to hell.



Seven

New Line

The seven deadly sins. Let's see: anger, avarice, envy, gluttony, pride, sloth... What's the seventh? Oh well. Morgan Freeman (*The Shawshank Redemption*) and Brad Pitt — Lust! That's it! — star as two cops after a serial killer who's serious about those sins being deadly.



Nadja

October Films

Just your average black-and-white, vampire lesbian horror/comedy/love story. Did we mention that David Lynch executive produced? Elina Löwensohn (the Romanian gymnast on that one *Seinfeld*) stars as the vampire Nadja. Peter Fonda plays Dr. Van Helsing as well as Dracula.

Jeffrey

Orion

A romantic comedy about the search for Mr. Right. Nice, fluffy — common film fodder. Unless the one searching is named Jeffrey (played by Steven Weber, TV's *Wings*). *Philadelphia* got serious about gay love in the age of AIDS. Now *Jeffrey* wants to get silly with it.



The Brothers McMullen

Fox Searchlight

The McMullen brothers are Catholic and Irish in New York. Which can be hell on relationships. One's single and playing; one's married and straying; one's committed but delaying. Ed Burns, who produced, wrote and directed this Sundance winner, also plays the player.



The Run of the Country

Castle Rock

Think your transition from high school to college was rough? Danny (Matt Keeslar, *Safe Passage*) goes through about every emotionally scarring event an 18-year-old Irishman can encounter, from death to pregnancy to more death and near death. But at least his country's peaceful.



Beyond Rangoon

Castle Rock

While her sister was piercing every body part for *Pulp Fiction*, Patricia Arquette (*True Romance*) was slogging through the jungles of Malaysia, which passed for war-torn Burma, circa 1988. She plays a woman who, by immersing herself in a nation's tragedies, is able to get past her own.



National Lampoon's Senior Trip

New Line

Those crazy high school kids. The "slackers" get detention and have to write to the president with suggestions for improving the educational system. So The Prez invites them all to D.C. With Tommy Chong (as in Cheech and) at the bus wheel, what a strange trip it'll be.



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On the Set

A special-effects artist painstakingly arranges yak hair on a giant rat creature. "Take note of this," says actor Tom Savini (*Creepshow I and II*). "Everybody else turns into a bat. I turn into a rat."

Savini plays Sex Machine, a customer at the Titty Twister bar in *From Dusk Till Dawn*, the upcoming Robert Rodriguez (*Desperado*) vampire horror film. Scriptwriter Quentin Tarantino (*Pulp Fiction*) and George Clooney (TV's *ER*) play gangster brothers who seek refuge at the Titty Twister.

Greg Nicotero, the "N" of the KNB special-effects company, demonstrates another of his creations, a twitching bat that attacks Clooney in the movie. "George was upset because the bat out-acted him," Nicotero says.

Nicotero also points out a decapitated head, which is modeled after Robert Kurtzman ("K" of KNB). "This is human hair," he says. "You can't style synthetic. See, Bob has kind of the Ohio high school hairdo." Everybody in the special-effects room gets killed at some point in the movie, Nicotero says.

Production designer Cecilia Montiel explains her vision of a new design for vampirism in Mexico: "Don't expect any Gothic here. It's *naco*. Border style — tacky and decadent."

Screen Saver

A Reason to Believe

A movie on date rape? Ugh. No thanks. But wait, there's *A Reason to Believe*.

Higher Learning was disappointing because it tried to tackle too many issues and couldn't give any the treatment they deserved — particularly the rape plot line, which got further convoluted with the sexual-orientation-questioning plot line.

A Reason to Believe is a thorough exploration of the subject, but it doesn't feel like an after-school special or one of those good-for-you movies you were forced to watch in health class — movies that are OK but that in no way relate to your life. These scenarios are believable, and the movie's actually still fun to watch. Music includes songs from REM, Blind Melon and 10,000 Maniacs.

A Reason to Believe stars Allison Smith (TV's *Kate & Allie*). It opens nationally in September.

