



Alan Cumming (right, with Jessica Lange) adds camp to *Titus*

TITUS
20th Century Fox

Not a release of the awful television series but a retelling of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, this film was unfairly classified as an art pic in theaters, and audiences weren't sure what to make of it.

Director Julie Taymor, the genius behind Broadway's *The Lion King*, helms this tale of seduction, betrayal and war with an astonishing hand. Aided by sets, costumes and art direction lavish enough to make this a prequel to *Moulin Rouge*, she is also abetted by sterling work from actors Anthony Hopkins, Jessica Lange and Alan Cumming.

With some nudity and explicit violence, this film is not for the prude or squeamish, but it's entertaining in the extreme and full of some of cinema's most haunting images in recent years. Although it has little gay content per se (same-sex couples are seen in orgy sequences), the presence of Cumming always adds a slight camp value.

Highly recommended, especially for those who like extravagant spectacles with top-notch acting. But you should watch it on the two-disc set, where you'll get multiple commentaries, a hefty documentary, Q & A, costume galleries and many more ultra-cool features.

ISN'T SHE GREAT
Universal

To answer the question posed by the title: NO!

Gay icon Bette Midler stars in this biographical film about *Valley of the Dolls* author Jacqueline Susann. Camp stage star Nathan Lane unconvincingly plays it straight as her husband and agent. Also starring are John Cleese, Stockard Channing and *Frasier*'s fey David Hyde Pierce.

None of the cast, talented as they might otherwise be, shows any skill at all

Out on DVD

What's new and hot
and what's new and not

BY ANDY MANGELS

in the film, other than the ability to embarrass themselves for all celluloid eternity. With this much gayness in front of the camera, it's astonishing that nothing queer ended up in the crappy excuse for a script, but it's perhaps a blessing in disguise; our community can't be blamed for this filmic abortion.

Not one of the worst films I've ever seen, but I'd still rather staple my eyelids closed than have to watch it again. If you must see it, the DVD features both widescreen and full-screen formats plus production notes, bios and a trailer.

BIG EDEN
Wolfe

This new release gets my vote as one of the sweetest and best-acted films about men falling in love...ever!

Arye Gross (*Ellen*) plays Henry Hart, a New York gay man who travels back to his small hometown to care for his ailing grandfather. He is surprised to find his straight crush of 20-plus

years has moved back as well, and he embarks on a mission to re-establish the intimacy they shared. As he does, he ignores the quiet Native American man who is falling in love with him.

Academy Award winner Louise Fletcher is along for the ride as well, playing a rare and very nice role.

The movie is likely to make you a bit misty-eyed, but rest assured this isn't a gay victim movie; it features exactly the happy ending you'll want, though the twists and turns to get there have some unexpected moments.

Big Eden is an extraordinary film, impeccably acted with fantastic scenery. (I ought to know—I grew up in Montana, where they shot it.) The two-disc set is packed with extended scenes, director's commentary, a behind-the-scenes documentary, soundtrack, recipes, trailers and more.



James Gandolfini (right, with Julia Roberts) makes a fine gay hit man in *The Mexican*

Hawkins as bisexual, she only mentions "dyke" once (in a semiderogatory way) and "gay" once, and it's never clear that she's either. While I am impressed enough by the music that I might pick up a CD, I can't recommend this film to anyone except hardcore fans. The DVD features commentary by the director and Hawkins, music videos, a photo gallery and more.

THE MEXICAN
Dreamworks

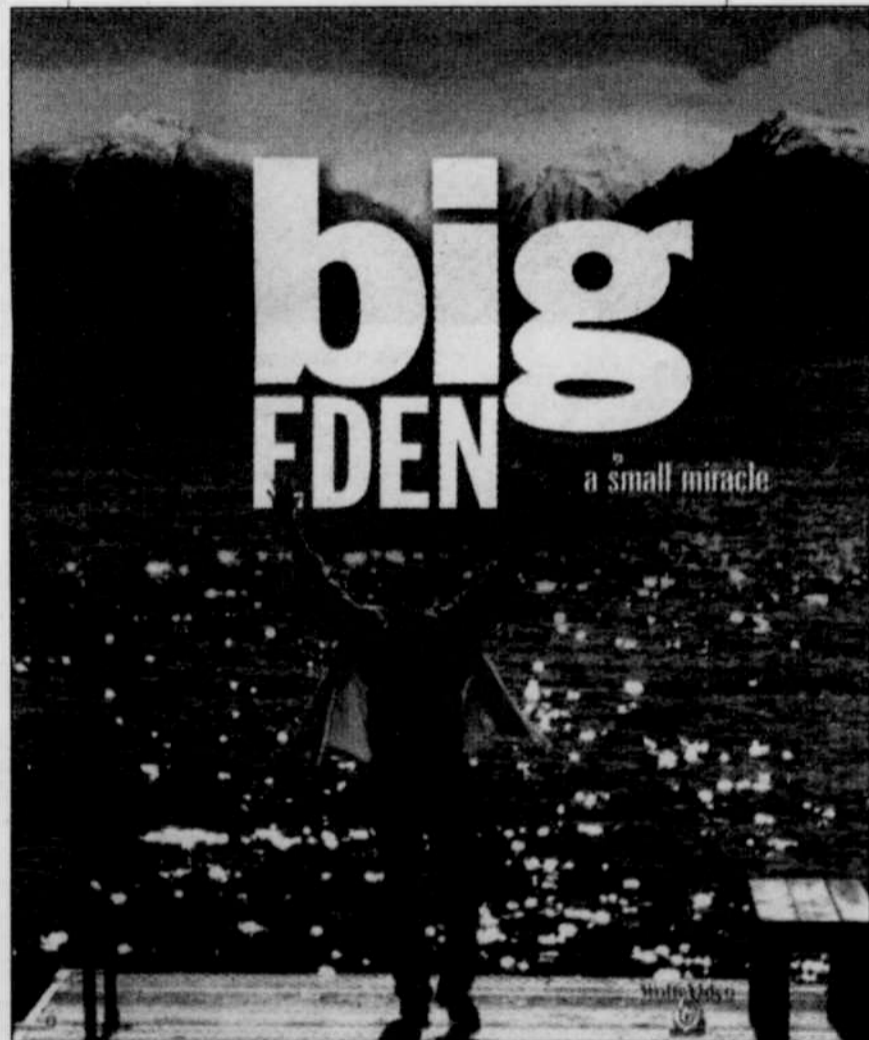
Gay audience members were taken by surprise with this 2001 film, but not by anything stars Brad Pitt or Julia Roberts did. He stars as a luckless boyfriend who has to claim a prized gun from criminal elements in Mexico, while she plays his long-suffering girlfriend, who gets kidnapped by a mob enforcer.

No stranger to the act, James Gandolfini (*The Sopranos*) portrays Roberts' burly-but-well-mannered kidnapper. The surprise comes a third of the way through when it's revealed his character is gay!

Although the concept of a gay hit man might cause some PC shrieks, the community has long pushed for gay roles of all types, and Gandolfini makes his character the most likable and well-rounded of the ensemble. He even gets a boyfriend, with his bearish size defying the pretty-gay-boy mentality so prevalent in Hollywood.

Although dragging at times, *The Mexican* is a fun popcorn movie that entertains and surprises along the way. The gay element and glam-scruffy appeal of the stars only add to its value. The DVD features deleted scenes, director's commentary, a behind-the-scenes documentary, a trailer and more. [C]

ANDY MANGELS is co-author of *Star Trek: The Next Generation Section 31: Rogue*, written in the midst of reviewing DVDs, movies, books and live theater for Just Out. Visit him at www.andymangels.com.



SOPHIE B. HAWKINS:
THE CREAM WILL RISE
DocuRama

The DVD cover touts this as "an intimate look at the bad girl of rock 'n' roll," but I'd say this is much too intimate, and I'd question Hawkins' inclusion as a bad girl.

This documentary follows the musician for an extended tour, featuring much onstage and backstage footage as well as endless reminiscences and therapy sessions with her mother. Shot in a cornucopia of film techniques (the 80 or so I counted made it busy as hell, though pretty at times), *Cream* is unfortunately devoid of any internal logic or narrative. Is it about the musician or a daughter in therapy?

The disjointedness even includes documentary no-nos such as unnamed people talking onscreen and names brought up with no explanation of what relation they are to anybody else.

Though press materials tout



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