



CRUSH

Andie MacDowell is the one with the crush—or rather the one head over heels in love with a much, much younger man (Kenny Doughty) in this uneven romantic tragicomedy. MacDowell and Doughty are both great, and the sex is hot, but the well-intentioned study of changing women's relationships in the face of an unconventional coupling turns into too much of a female-bonding sobfest.

—Lisa Bradshaw

DEATH TO SMOOCHY

Like previous Danny DeVito films (*Throw Momma from the Train*, *The War of the Roses*), his latest project brims with inspired lunacy, dark humor and inventive situations. Publicly disgraced kiddie show entertainer Robin Williams plots to destroy his successor, Smoochy (Edward Norton, brilliant as always), who meanwhile attempts to reform the corrupt and dangerous world of children's entertainment. Harvey Fierstein's amusing appearance as a charity fund racketeer is not the only "gay theme" here.

—Kevin Moore

HAPPENSTANCE

The adorable Audrey Tautou (*Amélie*) turns on the charm again in this fable about how even our smallest gestures can change the course of other people's lives. The original French title translates as *The Beating of*

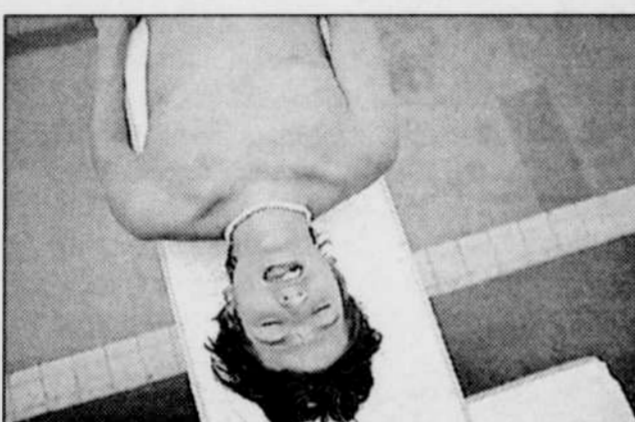
the Butterfly's Wings, a reference to the theory that a flapping insect in the Atlantic can cause a hurricane in the Pacific.

—Jim Radosta

IRIS

Kate Winslet actually seems to channel Iris Murdoch as a young woman despite writer/director Richard Eyre's determination to bland down the eccentric, brilliant bisexual novelist and her writer husband, John Bayley (Jim Broadbent and Hugh Bonneville), into tiresomely "serious" movie subjects. Judi Dench as the older Murdoch is fine but wasted, as Eyre's middlebrow sensibility precludes much of interest in favor of a predictable, Lifetime-movie Alzheimer's storyline.

—Christopher McQuain



Spanking the monkey in *Y Tu Mamá También*

KISSING JESSICA STEIN

Two attractive women find love in the personal ads, but can essentially straight girls be-

come gay? What could have been a homophobic embarrassment isn't in this adaptation by Jennifer Westfeldt and Heather Juergensen of their stage play. Fortunately the pair insisted on playing the leads, too, which is largely why this film is so darn endearing.

—LB

PANIC ROOM

In the "for what it is" category: For what it is—an action suspense thriller, basically—*Panic Room* is a success. Director David Fincher (*Seven*, *Fight Club*) offers the usual showy, technophilic camera tricks, and it's filmed in his patented slick, dark Dank 'n' Damp-ovision (which actually does benefit the story). We also get to see Jodie Foster display the fiercest maternal instincts this side of Linda Hamilton in *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*.

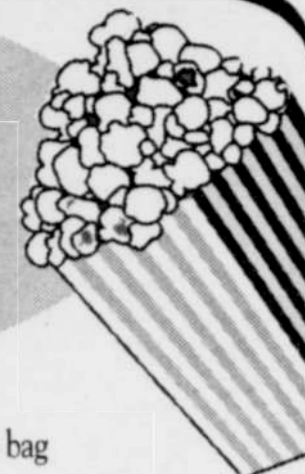
—CM

TREMBLING BEFORE G-D

Sandi Dubowski's must-see documentary follows the extremely varied lives of a group of lesbian and gay Orthodox Jews, each with a unique experience of the grossly unfair struggle and suffering that occurs when an individual's sexuality is pitted against faith. These stories, in their realness, are as painful as they are

What's Poppin'?

What's popped and what's flopped, in a theater near you.



dud, bottom of the bag

only if you're really hungry

good effort, pass the salt

mmmm, tasty!

get the big tub o' corn

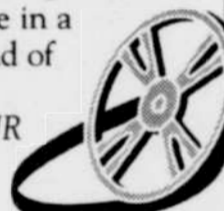
compelling; not everyone gets a happy ending, but everyone in front of Dubowski's camera earns our empathy.

—CM

Y TU MAMA TAMBIEN

Using storytelling quirks similar to those in *Amélie*, director/co-writer Alfonso Cuarón somehow achieves the impossible: A teen sex comedy that actually shows sex. A buddy movie in which one friendship's limits truly are put to the test. A coming-of-age road trip where the characters arrive in a much different place by the end of their journey. Don't miss it.

—JR



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