

What's Poppin'?

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

DAHMER

David Jacobson's powerful docudrama about Jeffrey Dahmer does the unthinkable—it turns the notorious serial killer into a pathetic specimen of humanity and makes a creditable effort toward explaining, without excusing, some of the mind-set that drove his crimes.

Dahmer was convicted in 1992 of murdering 16 young men, the killings being attended by various bizarre sex rituals including cannibalism. The case gained further notoriety because Milwaukee's homophobic police department blew the chance to nail Dahmer when they interpreted a desperate, naked, young Laotian man as the killer's lover running out after a "spat."



Dahmer plays through Sept. 12 at Clinton Street Theater

Dahmer was, in fact, known in the gay community as someone to avoid, but this didn't prevent the charismatic, racist, self-hating homosexual from attracting plenty of victims.

Jacobson, who also made 1993's *The Secret Life: Jeffrey Dahmer*, wants to do more than merely record reality, so he takes us (ready or not!) inside the killer's head, deftly interweaving memories of troubled teen years and family life with present-day scenes of seduction and murder. A particularly unsettling sequence shows the young Dahmer (Jeremy Renner) trying to seduce a straight boy by convincing him that getting a gay blow job would be a major act of rebellion. This cat-and-mouse game is punctuated with trademark attempts to drug his victim, followed by a sudden, lethal assault, visualized elliptically.

Renner's portrayal is intelligent and sympathetic, illustrating someone who is so shut off from his feelings that his only way to find love is through murdering and hacking up other gay men, the ultimate grim response of the self-loathing homo.

—Gary Morris

CITY BY THE SEA

Poor Robert De Niro. How did the '80s Raging Bull wind up in such average fare of late? He does his best with this dull, clunking drama about a New York detective trying to protect his Long Beach junkie son from being arrested for murder, while battling thugs with names like Spider and Snake. Frances McDormand is saddled with the thankless role of the patient-to-a-point girlfriend.

—Lisa Bradshaw

- ☹️ dud, bottom of the bag
- ☹️☹️ only if you're really hungry
- ☹️☹️☹️ good effort, pass the salt
- ☹️☹️☹️☹️ mmmm, tasty!
- ☹️☹️☹️☹️☹️ get the big tub o' corn

THE GOOD GIRL

Friends star Jennifer Aniston rescues her career from the brink of syndication in this challenging dramedy from the guys behind *Chuck & Buck*. She plays a depressed wife whose misery loves the company of a sullen co-worker (Jake Gyllenhaal). When he turns out to be more than she bargained for, she finds herself at a difficult crossroads.

—Jim Radosta

NEVER AGAIN

A misanthropic exterminator (Jeffrey Tambor) loses his erection during a heterosexual encounter and convinces himself he must be gay. While cruising for "chicks with dicks" at a bar he meets another fiftysomething who has given up on love (Jill Clayburgh). Believe it or not, this is the premise behind writer/director Eric Schaefer's shockingly inept romantic comedy, made further unwatchable with tasteless tranny, midget and dildo "jokes." What a missed opportunity to put an older couple in the spotlight.

—JR

ONE HOUR PHOTO

Sure, it's trashy and manipulative, but it's so entertaining! Mark Romanek (the genius behind groundbreaking videos by Madonna, Michael Jackson and Nine Inch Nails) wrote and directed this creepy thriller about a loner photo clerk (Robin Williams in a strong performance) obsessed with the "perfect" family.

—JR

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