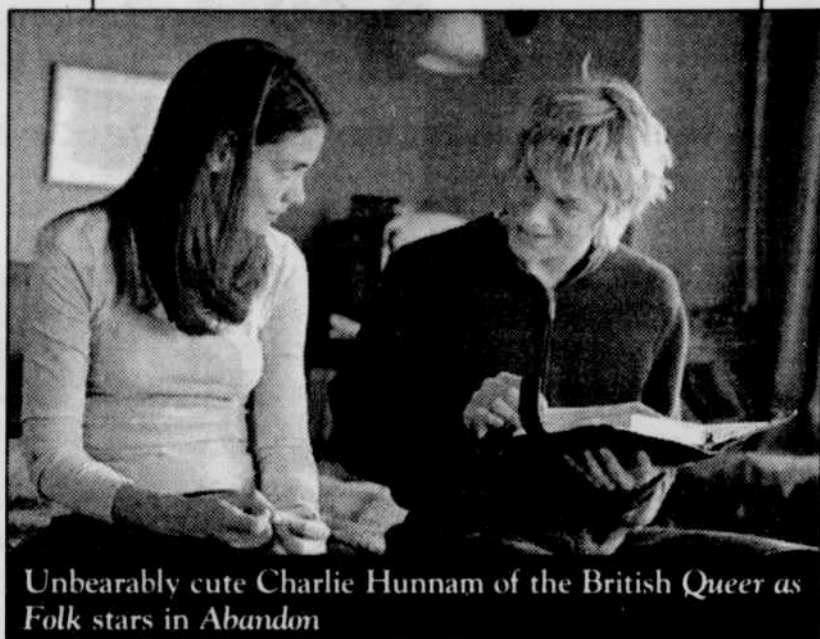




ABANDON

Writer/director Stephen Gaghan shows a fraction of the flair for storytelling he demonstrated penning *Traffic* in this boring thriller about an aimless detective (Benjamin Bratt) investigating a college student (Katie Holmes) who is being stalked by her ex-boyfriend (Charlie Hunnam of the U.K. *Queer as Folk*). Like *The Sixth Sense*, the ending comes as a big surprise but proves to be too little, too late.

—Jim Radosta



Unbearably cute Charlie Hunnam of the British *Queer as Folk* stars in *Abandon*

AUTO FOCUS

Video killed the TV star in this unsettling biopic about *Hogan's Heroes* actor and homemade porn addict Bob Crane (Greg Kinnear)—a sad, voyeuristic *E! True Hollywood Story* dramatization. My major gripe is that the ending—much like the unsolved murder that ended Crane's life—is abrupt and unsatisfying.

—JR

BOWLING FOR COLUMBINE

Rather than jumping on an anti-gun soapbox, renegade filmmaker Michael Moore instead delves deeply into the roots of the problem: Why the hell do so many Americans shoot each other? His evaluation reveals a country immersed in hateful xenophobia, corporate domination and paralyzing fear. Of course, one can't help but wonder whether

a great deal of that paranoia stems from watching documentaries like this.

—JR

HEAVEN

Heaven is hell. Cate Blanchett certainly looks good as a bald-headed bomber, and her puppy-eyed boytoy Giovanni Ribisi is equally fetching. But they're trapped in a ponderous movie that tries vainly to inject pathos into its tired tale of lovers on the lam. Blanchett completists and fans of Euro-angst are *Heaven's* only hope.

—Gary Morris

IGBY GOES DOWN

A sort of counterculture coming-of-age story about a juvenile delinquent (Kieran Culkin, channeling Robert Downey Jr.) and a

bunch of other unique, complex characters who come in and out of his messed-up life: his caustic mother (Susan Sarandon), despicable brother (Ryan Phillippe), JAP girlfriend (Claire Danes) and questionable mentor (Jeff Goldblum). An incredible debut for writer/director Burr Steers.

—JR

JACKASS THE MOVIE

Sure, I could go on and on about how this big-screen version of MTV's "don't try these stunts at home" program hardly qualifies as a movie. I could chastise these dudes for the utter lack of respect they show their digestive systems, their bodies, their fellow human beings. But why bother? It's strangely entertaining, and the homophobic subtext (can you say "anal fixation?") makes it worth the nausea.

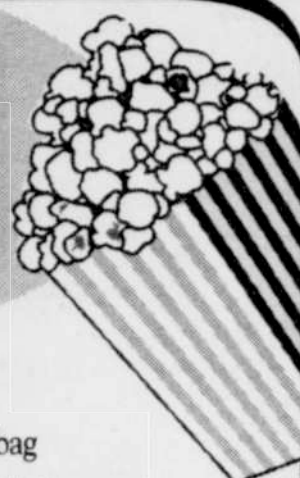
—JR

SECRETARY

Finally—a movie about B/D/S/M that doesn't play it for comic relief or as a freaky perversion. Maggie Gyllenhaal and the constantly underrated James Spader are Oscar-worthy as a secretary and boss respectively crossing the boundaries of the professional. As she learns to do it right, he struggles with notions of the

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

immoral. You'll keep waiting for the film to screw it all up, but it never does. See it.

—Lisa Bradshaw

WHITE OLEANDER

A teen girl (Alison Lohman) enters the ridiculous foster care system after her murderous mom (Michelle Pfeiffer) goes to jail. Surprisingly unsentimental for an Oprah Book Club adaptation, director Peter Kosminsky's film is filled with memorable characters and strong performances, especially Robin Wright Penn and Renée Zellweger as two flawed guardians. How refreshing to see a chick flick that isn't polluted by Hollywood fakes like Sandra Bullock and Ashley Judd!

—JR



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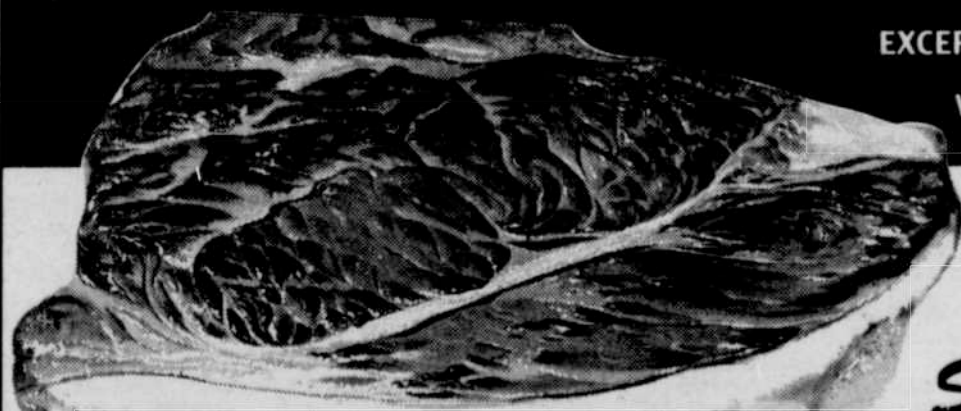
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