



☼☼☼ CITY OF GOD

This series of vignettes from the hoods of Brazil is too long, beyond violent and overpopulated with characters but remains worth seeing for the young cast's strong performances as well as the audacious visual flair displayed by directors Kátia Lund and Fernando Meirelles.

—Jim Radosta

☼☼☼☼ THE HOURS

Slightly uneven due to some poor adaptation choices is the only criticism for this film version of gay writer Michael Cunningham's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel about the lives of three women in different time periods linked through Virginia Woolf's 1925 novel *Mrs. Dalloway*. Nicole Kidman deserved her Golden Globe for her glowing portrayal of Woolf, while Meryl Streep, Julianne Moore, Ed Harris and Stephen Dillane complete a perfect ensemble cast.

—Lisa Bradshaw

☼☼☼ HOW TO LOSE A GUY IN 10 DAYS

Yeah, it's a preposterous gimmick: An ad exec (Matthew McConaughey) bets colleagues he can make a woman love him within a week and a half. His target turns out to be a columnist (Kate Hudson) researching ways to get dumped just as quickly. The couple's sweet chemistry and the script's shrewd observations made me

disregard the awful soundtrack, bad hair and formulaic climax.

—JR

☼☼☼☼ THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE TWO TOWERS

Director Peter Jackson kicks ass again in the second installment of what is shaping up to be cinema's greatest fantasy trilogy—and leaves me wondering more than ever how he lost last year's Academy Award to Ron Howard's *A Beautiful Mind*. Queer audiences will appreciate the growing affection between Frodo (Elijah Wood) and Sam (Sean Astin) and, of course, the return of Gandalf (gay fave Ian McKellen, another victim of Oscar's snub).

—JR

☼☼☼☼ NARC

Joe Carnahan wrote and directed this tight drama about two morally ambiguous police officers (Jason Patric and Ray Liotta, both excellent) investigating the murder of a fellow cop. Strong performances, shocking twists and uneasy answers keep the familiar territory captivating.

—JR

☼☼☼☼ NICHOLAS NICKLEBY

Writer/director Douglas McGrath (*Emma*) whittles the Charles Dickens classic down to a

simple two-hour treat about a charming young man (Charlie Hunnam of the U.K. *Queer as Folk*) who befriends a disabled orphan (Jamie Bell of *Billy Elliot*). Homoerotic subtext aside, the cast is full of "family" (Nathan Lane and Alan Cumming) and "friends" (Barry Humphries, aka Dame Edna).

—JR



Don't miss *The Pianist*, Roman Polanski's best film since *Chinatown*

☼☼☼☼ THE PIANIST

Adrien Brody (*The Thin Red Line*) delivers one of the strongest performances in recent memory as a musician enduring the Nazi destruction of the Warsaw ghetto. This harrowing, inspiring survival story is easily

What's Popping?



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

director Roman Polanski's best film since 1974's *Chinatown*.

—JR

☼☼☼ TALK TO HER

Two men (a nurse and a journalist) bond while waiting for two women (a dancer and a matador) to come out of their comas in Pedro Almodóvar's latest quirky soap opera. The gay writer/director explores the striking contrasts between the couples but ventures into creepy territory when the nurse, whose sexuality is questionable, lets his obsession with the dancer go too far.

—JR



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