



☼☼☼ 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

☼☼☼☼ CONFESIONS OF A DANGEROUS MIND

George Clooney makes a strong directorial debut with this loopy biography of *Gong Show* host Chuck Barris (Sam Rockwell), who says the CIA recruited him as an assassin during the 1970s. This far-fetched claim is handled with brilliant ambivalence by ultra-creative screenwriter Charlie Kaufman (*Adaptation*).

—JR

☼☼☼ THE GURU

This campy comedy—about an Indian immigrant who poses as a spiritual seer—has plenty of queer appeal: Adorable star Jimi Mistry played a gay doctor on the U.K. soap *EastEnders*, it was directed by Daisy von Scherler Mayer of *Party Girl* fame, and the musical sequences are jubilantly choreographed. Still, the formulaic script fails to consistently channel all of the potential talent on hand.

—JR

☼☼☼ 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

swordplay epics can be. Get the big tub o' corn for this Italian import, and maybe the 5-pound box of Jujubes. (Plays Feb. 26 and 27 only at Clinton Street Theater.)

What's Poppin'?

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



—Gary Morris

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

—JR

☼☼☼☼ SPIRITED AWAY

This instant classic by visionary animation director Hayao Miyazaki (*Princess Mononoke*) follows a young girl who stumbles upon a portal that pulls her into a fantasy world filled with spirits, ghosts and other indescribable creatures. Because the audience experiences this strange land through her innocent eyes, the journey becomes all the more fascinating and unsettling. If this

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

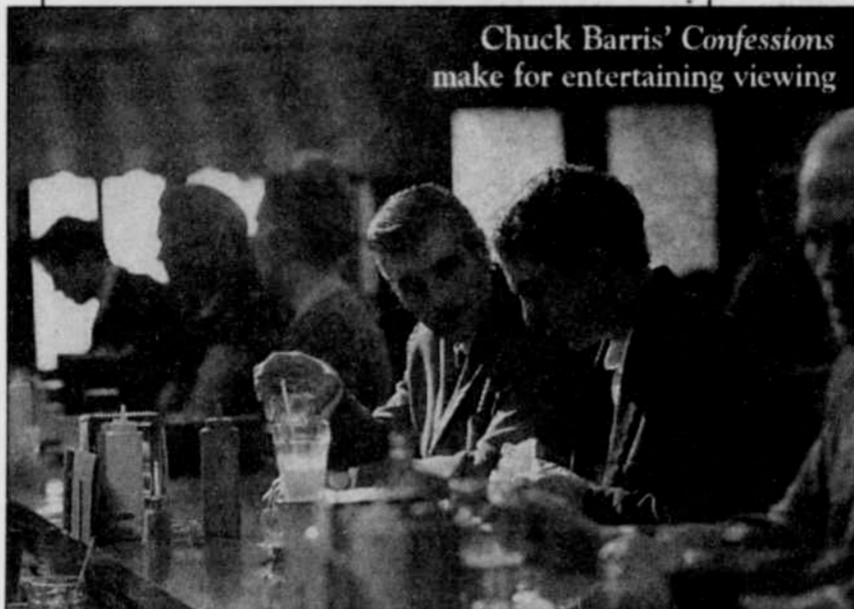
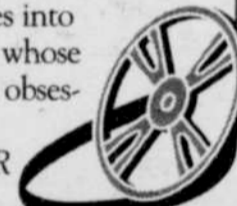
film loses Best Animated Feature to some Disney crap, something is seriously wrong with the Oscars.

—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



Chuck Barris' *Confessions* make for entertaining viewing

☼☼☼☼ ON GUARD

Swashbucklers rank behind even westerns and musicals among cinema's endangered species, but Philippe de Broca's *On Guard*, made in 1997 but only now reaching these shores, is a welcome reminder of how fun and exciting these historical

lite

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