



THE BARBARIAN INVASIONS

A sequel to French-Canadian director Denys Arcand's *The Decline of the American Empire*, this film, about a dying man (Rémy Girard) who gathers his friends together, stands on its own. The circle of Montreal baby boomers ruefully grapples with the failings of their lives and their generation as evidenced by troubled familial relationships and a decidedly non-utopian society.

—Christopher McQuain

COLD MOUNTAIN

A preacher's daughter (Nicole Kidman) and a rugged stranger (Renée Zellweger) quasi-Sapphically tend the Civil War-era Southern home fires while the former's true love (Jude Law), a Confederate soldier, journeys home. The film's elegant, polished look and talented, sexy name actors can't disguise the script's Harlequin-romance-cum-Little House on the Prairie tone. *Cold Mountain* is neither terrible nor in any way essential.

—CM

THE COOLER

Character actor William H. Macy takes center stage in this intense dramedy about a sad sack whose odd job requires him to jinx gamblers at a Las Vegas casino. But when lady luck (Maria Bello) enters his life, his

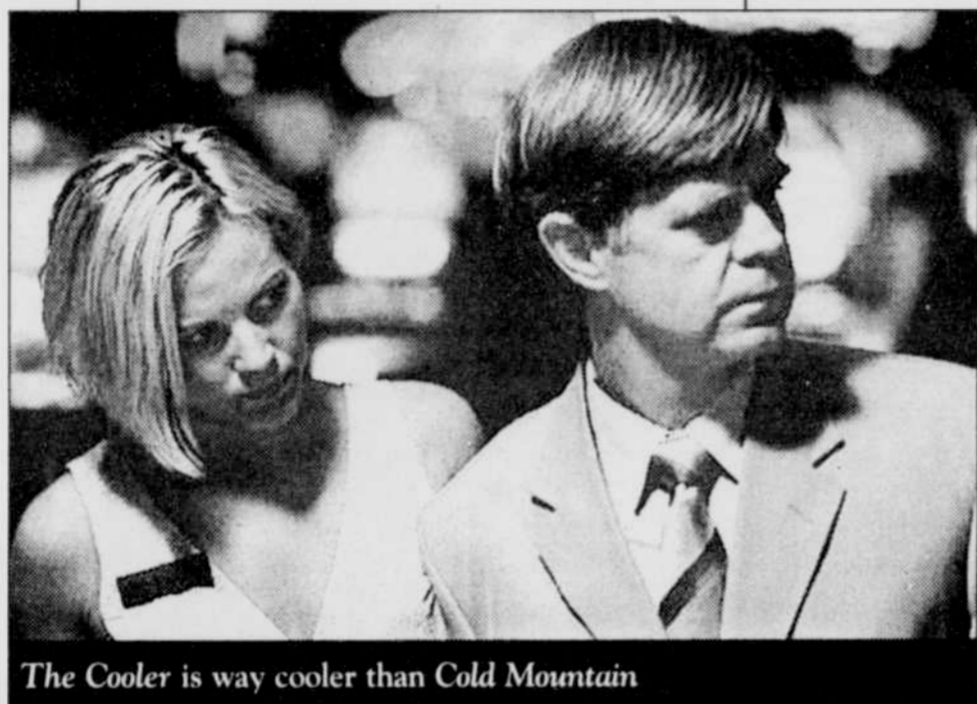
cruel boss (Alec Baldwin) flips out. One of the more enlightening films about Sin City, with strong support from Paul Sorvino as a lounge singer who is way past his prime.

—Jim Radosta

IN AMERICA

A young Irish family loses a son and escapes grief by traveling to... a drug-infested building in Manhattan? Mom (Samantha Morton) and Pop (Paddy Considine) try to get on with life, while their young daughters befriend an artist neighbor (hunky Djimon Hounsou) who has AIDS. Emotional manipulation nearly sinks this film from Jim Sheridan (*In the Name of the Father*), save for great acting.

—Meg Daly



The Cooler is way cooler than Cold Mountain

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RETURN OF THE KING

Not having been a filmgoer who slathered over the first two entries in this epic trilogy film director Peter Jackson, I admit defeat. *The Return of the King* surpasses its predecessors in depth of story, cinematography, character development and sheer beauty of sound over imagery. The battle scenes reference their own brutality and hopelessness. The women get meatier parts. I know you won't miss this movie, but don't miss this movie.

—Lisa Bradshaw

PETER PAN

While the costumes and sets are wondrous, and Jason Isaacs makes a crackling and sexy Captain Hook, the title role's young Jeremy Sumpter seems as if he's trying to play the wooden Pinocchio more than the Boy Who Can Never Grow Up. Still, it's a more faithful adaptation than any film treatment of this beloved novel so far; kids (and some adults) will love it.

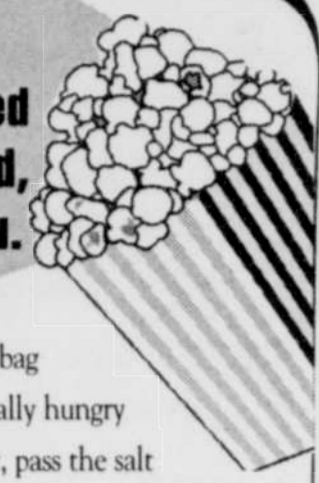
—Andy Mangels

SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE

Submitted for your approval:

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

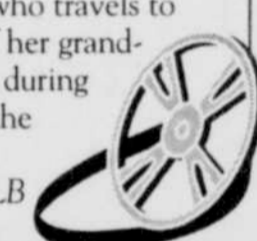
an alternate universe in which a renowned playwright (Diane Keaton) falls for her daughter's boyfriend, a cadaverous hip-hop mogul (Jack Nicholson), because he calls her "flinty." Writer/director Nancy Meyers (*What Women Want*) somehow manages to fill her film with characters whose words and actions have no bearing on any reality with which I'm familiar.

—JR

THE TRIPLETS OF BELLEVILLE

This clever bit of movie from French animator and writer Sylvain Chomet veers just a little too far toward the freakish than is good for it, but the delightful animation and story about a no-nonsense woman who travels to the United States in search of her grandson (who has been kidnapped during the Tour de France) is worth the investment.

—LB



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Helena de Crespó

3 fabulous women



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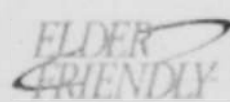
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