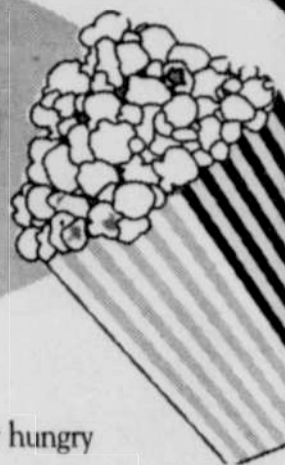


What's Poppin'?

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



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

while effectively conveying the thrill that drives these people to put their posteriors in peril. —JR

🍿🍿🍿 WIN A DATE WITH TAD HAMILTON!

I'm grading this youthful romantic comedy on a curve because, well, I'm a child of the '80s who appreciates any directors aspiring to be the next John Hughes. Robert Luketic (*Legally Blonde*) shows promise with a cute concept (small-town girl scores night out on the town with celebrity bad boy trying to clean up his act), a formulaic twist (best bud hides his crush on her) and memorable characters (horny friend, unhip dad, shallow agents). —JR



🍿🍿 BIG FISH

Albert Finney shines in this otherwise dismal look at a man (Billy Crudup) about to become a father trying to solve the mystery of his own dying father's (Finney) tall tales. Too fantastical for its violence and too violent for its fantasy, *Big Fish* is yet another example of a Tim Burton directing job gone wild (see: *Sleepy Hollow* and *Planet of the Apes*).

—Lisa Bradshaw

🍿 THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT

A college student (Ashton Kutcher) exploring the blackouts he experienced as a kid discovers his ability to travel back in time to change his troubled past and that of his 1) crazy father, committed to a mental institution; 2) single, hardworking, young mom; 3) girlfriend terrorized by her drunken pedophile father; 4) brutally cruel girlfriend's brother; 5) childhood friend driven insane by acts of brutally cruel girlfriend's brother. Sound like too much? It is.

—LB

🍿🍿🍿 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. The academy must

have thought so, anyway—it's been rereleased due to four Oscar nominations.

—Jim Radosta

🍿🍿🍿 THE FOG OF WAR

You can sense the weight of the world in the weary eyes of former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, the subject of this riveting Oscar-nominated documentary from Errol Morris (*The Thin Blue Line*). Having played a pivotal role in World War II, the Cuban Missile Crisis and Vietnam, the octogenarian has a wealth of surprisingly progressive insights on mistakes made and lessons learned.

—JR

🍿🍿 HOUSE OF SAND AND FOG

An alcoholic divorcée (Jennifer Connelly) takes revenge on an Iranian immigrant (Ben Kingsley) whose family moves into her foreclosed house after she neglects to pay the bills. Although beautifully shot and well-acted, this tragedy left my eyes dry because the central figure draws little sympathy for her self-centered actions.

—JR

🍿🍿🍿 MIRACLE

Saddled with an insipid title and the Disney moniker, you don't get much more

than you bargained for from this feel-good flick starring Kurt Russell as the coach of the 1980 U.S. Olympic hockey team that (miraculously!) beat the Soviets and brought home gold during a turbulent period of recent world history. But it's really damn entertaining and, yes, I got misty. Go team!

—LB

🍿🍿🍿 TOUCHING THE VOID

This excruciating documentary gives us a front-row seat to a near-deadly 1985 mountain climb in Peru. Using re-enactments as well as intense interviews with survivors Joe Simpson and Simon Yates, director Kevin Macdonald (*One Day in September*) cranks up the drama



Kick-ass documentary *Touching the Void* plays through Feb. 12 at Cinema 21



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