What's Poppin'?

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

The Barbarian Invasions

Rereleased due to its recent Oscar nomination (and subsequent win), this sequel to French-Canadian director Denys Arcand's *The Decline of the American Empire*, 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*

Dirty Dancing: Havana Nights

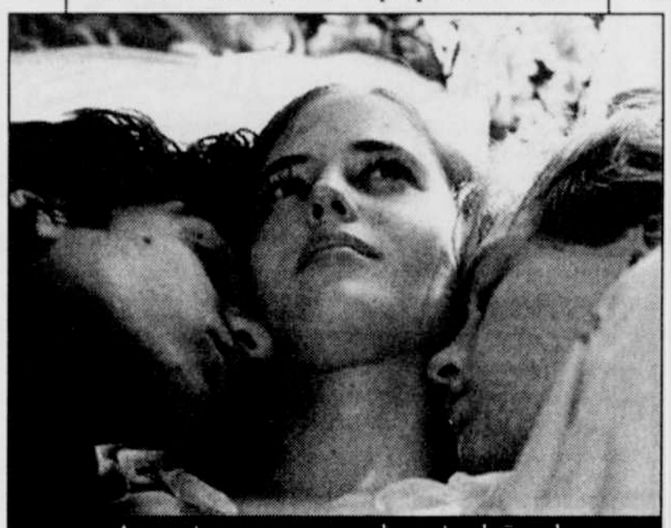
Bookish Katey Miller (Romola Garai) visits 1958 Havana with her family, where she meets the sexy Xavier (played by *Y Tu Mamá También*'s Diego Luna), from whom she learns the *seduction of the mambo*. But parents and peers hold her back! Every time this awful but somehow watchable sequel to *Dirty Dancing* threatens to become serious, it collapses into the Katey Questions: Will the white girl win the big dance contest? Will she fuck Xavier?

—*Gary Morris*

The Dreamers

The latest film from Bernardo Bertolucci (*The Last Emperor*) gives us a movie-obsessed Parisian trio of twenty-somethings—young American Matthew (Michael Pitt of *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*) and student-rebel twins Theo (Louis Garrel) and Isabelle (Eva Green)—forging their sexual and political identities during France's fascinating political upheavals of 1968. The film's polysexual and political conscientiousness is compelling; Bertolucci's camera is clear-eyed and tender in its explicit erotic and psychological intimacy.

—CM



Attractive young sex and movie-obsessed Europeans in *The Dreamers*. Cool.

Oscars: The Review

A crowning moment of this year's Academy Awards was when director Adam Elliot thanked his boyfriend in his acceptance speech for Best Animated Short. But when people cheered it was an obligatory sort of yay, like, "Wow, you shocked us: a gay person in Hollywood." (You may have missed this, of course, being too gagged out by Billy Crystal's naked body in the intro to be capable of going on.)

Equally bland were all those beige-colored gowns and unrouged lips. It was as if Julia, Charlize and Naomi called each other the night before and decided "Band-Aid" was the black of 2004. Thank the aquamarine goddess and the Saint of Real Women Curves for Scarlett Johansson and Samantha Morton.

In a way, the putty-robed superstars were emblematic of this year's Oscars, which were all about emaciated speeches and lackluster jokes. Take Charlize Theron, our new Best Actress, who remembered to thank her lawyer but forgot to thank the real lesbian who inspired her award-winning lesbian role.

—*Meg Daly*

The Passion of the Christ

Try this little experiment if you can't keep yourself from going to see homophobic Mel Gibson's propagandistic epic: Pretend you don't know anything about this story or about world religion or about Mel Gibson. If you do this, it's kinda interesting to witness leadership, persecution and torture in a certain time and place through shadowy, brooding imagery with some fairly decent acting.

—*Lisa Bradshaw*

bottom of the bag

only if you're really hungry

good effort, pass the salt

mmmm, tasty!

get the big tub o' corn

Starsky & Hutch

Everything '70s can be found in this movie version of the late cop TV show. There's a disco dance-off, a Ford Grand Torino, Fu Manchu mustaches. Fortunately, director Todd Phillips (*Old School*) has enough sense not to make it simply a period parade. Ben Stiller and Owen Wilson are, respectively, the overzealously square Starsky and the slacker dude Hutch, trying to nail a drug dealer (played with handy villainy by Vince Vaughn). This film belongs to the too-good chemistry between Stiller and Wilson in their sixth film together. Why these guys haven't gotten hitched—consider this an invitation to Portland, boys—is a mystery.

—GM

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