

# What's Poppin'?

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

## DOGVILLE

Danish director Lars von Trier's follow-up to *Dancer in the Dark* is also a contemplation of the horrors experienced by a woman (Nicole Kidman) at the hands of moralistic, hypocritical residents of a small American town. This time, however, he's lowered the depressive-martyrdom factor and upped the ambiguity by leading everything to an unexpected, disturbingly gratifying conclusion.

—Christopher McQuain

## ELLA ENCHANTED

Take 10 parts *Shrek*, fold in five parts *Cinderella* and *Chueless*. Mix well, then separate animation, leaving live action and CGI special effects. Sprinkle in supporting roles from vets of *Monty Python* (Eric Idle) and *Absolutely Fabulous* (Joanna Lumley). Serve with zero advertising. Why Miramax buried this lighthearted and often funny film is a mystery, but those fond of fairy tales will want to give *Ella* a proper viewing.

—Andy Mangels

☹☹☹☹☹ dud, bottom of the bag

☹☹☹☹☹ only if you're really hungry

☹☹☹☹☹ good effort, pass the salt

☹☹☹☹☹ mmmm, tasty!

☹☹☹☹☹☹☹ get the big tub o' corn

former Mormon C. Jay Cox actually seems to have much to say about the extreme conflicts within gays who want to love their religion as much as their hunky neighbors. Instead, it's rushed and trivialized, despite commendable efforts from leading men Steve Sandvoss and Wes Ramsey.

—LB

## MEAN GIRLS

This throwback to '80s films of yore where teen-age outcasts are pit against the beautiful people (in this case an unforgettable trio of snobbalicious girls known as "The Plastics") is mostly deftly handled by writer Tina Fey, who riddles the film with her past and present *Saturday Night Live* co-workers (most notably the hilarious Tim Meadows as a daffy high school principal). But, like many an SNL skit, the darkly comic fish-out-of-water plot, about a home-schooled girl (Lindsay Lohan) falling prey to public school society, falters and whines before petering out.

—LB

## THE PUNISHER

Those who felt the *Batman* films were too subtle in their homoeroticism will welcome *The Punisher*. Marvel Comics' gun-toting antihero is played by Tom Jane and his abs, which get enough close-ups to warrant their own screen credit. The slim plot also features torture and fights that look like they were choreographed by Colt Studios.

—AM

## YOUNG ADAM

British writer/director David Mackenzie has found a perfectly skilled cast to breathe color into the subtleties of his vision of a morally gray landscape. Ewan McGregor, who just keeps getting better, is a drifter who knows more about a body found floating in a canal than he cares to admit and can't keep in check his passion for his boss's wife, played by Tilda Swinton, who leavens the brew with her sweaty, Jarmanesque queer enlightenment.

—Kobe Kemple

Michele's lazy summer days are interrupted by a frightening discovery in the hauntingly beautiful *I'm Not Scared*

## I'M NOT SCARED

In another testament to how brilliantly world cinema outside the United States handles stories centered around children, this new movie from celebrated Italian director Gabriele Salvatores about a 10-year-old boy (Giuseppe Crustuabi) who discovers a child being held captive in a large hole in the ground presents a simple story mired in layers of complexity and ambiguous emotions. Don't miss what is surely this year's best cinematography, and possibly best film, on the big screen.

—Lisa Bradshaw

## LATTER DAYS

It's too bad this indie flick about a closeted gay Mormon missionary falling in love and lust with his out-and-proud new neighbor is badly written and a directorial mess, because first-time filmmaker and

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