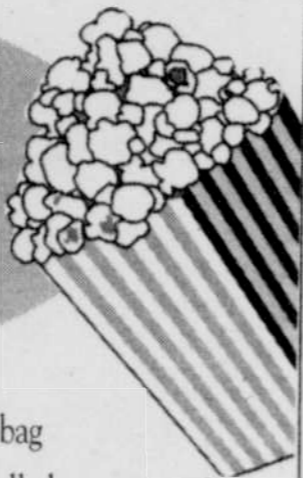




# What's Poppin'?

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



ANCHORMAN: THE LEGEND OF RON BURGUNDY

In the mood for slapstick? Feel like letting your everyday anxieties slip away while you bathe in the soothing glow of the silver screen? Will Ferrell's latest vehicle, *Anchorman*, will help you do nothing. The story shines with its hilarious characters and punch-drunk gender role parodies; it's great for a robust laugh or two. Laughter is scientifically proven to chill you out.

—Evan James

THE CLEARING

Forget the Oscar talk. How anyone could mistake the boilerplate performances by Helen Mirren and Robert Redford here as special is beyond me. This maudlin, predictable kidnapping drama is further bogged down by endless close-ups of Mirren's tiresomely anguished face. The only thing worthwhile about this trite, poor-little-rich-folks movie is Willem Dafoe, whose character gets within spitting distance of the tragic pathos the film laboriously aspires to.

—Gary Morris



De-Lovely: Well, not quite

DE-LOVELY

This is the second biopic of gay composer and raconteur Cole Porter, following the 1946 version with Cary Grant. The earlier film sanitized Cole of any queer impulses, but *De-Lovely* doesn't do as much better as it should, given that the world is much different than it was 60 years ago. The film looks good—as colorful as a musical should be—and Kevin Kline plays Porter with the right mix of camp and pathos. But the script insists on confusing the crucial gay issue by giving him romantic impulses toward wifey (Ashley Judd) that never existed. Fans of modern singers interpreting Tin Pan Alley will welcome such oddities as Sheryl Crow doing "Begin the Beguine," but purists will blanch at this and other liberties taken in a misguided attempt to reach a youth market that doesn't know, and couldn't care less, about Cole Porter.

—GM

dud, bottom of the bag

only if you're really hungry

good effort, pass the salt

mmmm, tasty!

get the big tub o' corn

THE DOOR IN THE FLOOR

This alternately funny and sad film is actually better than the John Irving novel, *A Widow for One Year*, from which it was adapted. A spotless cast helmed by Jeff Bridges and Kim Basinger, whose character deflowers a 16-year-old boy, makes every moment watchable even if you end up asking yourself what the point of it all was.

—J.B. Rabin

HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN

Director Alfonso Cuarón (*Y Tu Mamá También*) takes over for Chris Columbus and pumps new life into this underperforming franchise about the young wizard (Daniel Radcliffe) and his adventures at Hogwarts. This time around the acting is better, the nemesis (Gary Oldman) is more ominous, and the special effects are truly magical.

—Jim Radosta

I'LL SLEEP WHEN I'M DEAD

No, you'll sleep when you're in the theater. Mike Hodges (*Croupier*) directs this neo-noir revenge drama, which opens July 30, with stupefying slowness. Starring the fetching Clive

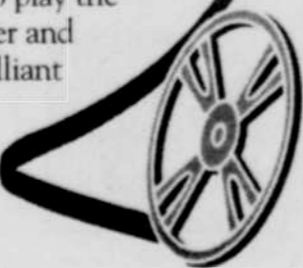
Owen (with and without beard), the film laboriously follows a reformed crime kingpin as he takes on the evil bisexual crime boss who raped his bratty little brother. Maybe it's better if you do sleep—that way you may not notice the homophobia that filigrees this unnecessary film.

—GM

THE STORY OF THE WEEPING CAMEL

In Mongolia's Gobi Desert, a nomadic family helps with the delivery of a baby camel. The mother refuses to nurse the calf, and all attempts to bring the two together fail. Days pass, and the calf becomes weak despite being bottle-fed. At last, the family calls on tradition and hires a musician to play the Mongolian violin for mother and baby. The results of this brilliant and moving documentary will stun any viewer.

—Nadia Ali Maiwandi



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