

REVIEWS

Blade: Trinity

Shirtless muscular men wrestling in leather pants. Lots of talk about dicks and blow jobs and butt cheeks. The nelliest vampire slayer with six-pack abs ever. Close-ups of treasure trails. Parker Posey snarling lines and wearing hair by Cuisinart. Wesley Snipes standing up with a monstrous hard-on after interrogation. A vampire Pomeranian. If writer/director David S. Goyer's *Blade: Trinity* isn't the gayest vampire movie ever made, it isn't for lack of trying. Thank God for Ryan Reynolds, who saves this *Showgirls with Fangs* from truly sucking. **D+** for effort, **A-** for homo subtext

—Andy Mangels

Bride and Prejudice

Some may wince at the idea of a modern-day Bollywood version of *Pride and Prejudice*. But Jane Austen is nothing if not universal, and her witty take on the schemes of middle-class social climbers trying to enter high society by making "good marriages" is as timely as ever. Gurinder Chadha (*Bend It Like Beckham*) has directed the perfect winter entertainment—a big, cheesy story with broad characters, lots of humor and heartbreak, endless plot contrivances, riotous colors and wonderfully over-the-top musical numbers throughout. (Careful viewers will notice sari-clad drag queens in some of them.) This crowd-pleaser could be a Bollywood breakthrough. **B**

—Gary Morris

House of Flying Daggers

The heyday of Hong Kong action films has long since passed, though occasionally a prestige film surfaces. (Think *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* or the more recent *Hero*.) *House* is very much in that mode—celebrated director (Zhang Yimou), classy stars (Takeshi Kaneshiro, Zhang Ziyi), gorgeous photography and a tragic-romantic story punctuated by martial arts wizardry: Two policemen try to infiltrate and topple the revolutionary Flying Daggers while romancing a beautiful courtesan who may be an agent of the Daggers. This sounds promising, and the shimmering tableaux and exciting action sequences are certainly diverting. But the whole thing is so portentous, it ultimately fails to engage. **C**

—GM

Incident at Loch Ness

If the *Waiting for Guffman* gang went to Scotland, their video journal would resemble this droll mockumentary about a film crew searching for the Loch Ness Monster. Accompanied by an incompetent producer and some bewildered sound and camera technicians, acclaimed German director Werner Herzog discovers that Nessie is alive and well—and pissed off to boot. Meanwhile, his buxom sonar operator slinks around the boat in a G-string bikini. It's obvious that Herzog and company had a ton of fun making this film, and their silliness is downright contagious. Many of the jokes outstay their welcome, however. **B**

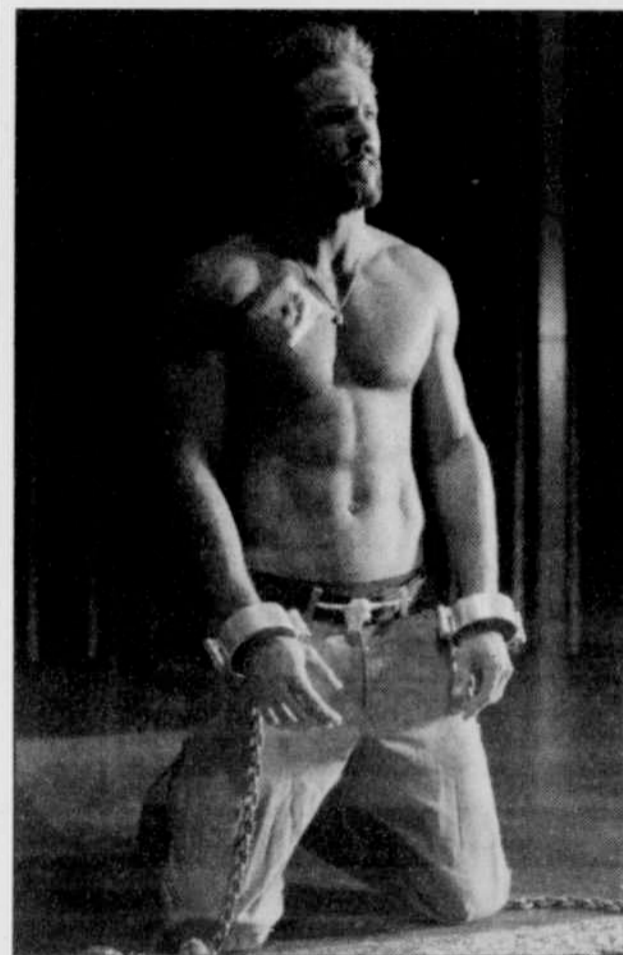
—Stephen Blair

The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou

The latest from Wes Anderson (*Rushmore*, *The Royal Tenenbaums*) follows the adventures and (self) discoveries of Jacques Cousteau-esque

oceanographer/documentarian Steve Zissou (a hilariously crabby Bill Murray) and his passengers: a long-lost adult son (Owen Wilson), a prickly reporter with problems of her own (Cate Blanchett) and a wearily tolerant wife (Anjelica Huston). As usual, the writer/director's singular visual style approximates the charming, chockablock artifice of a grade school diorama, and he has a straight-forward, disarmingly childlike way of depicting complicated grown-up emotions; a sweet sadness underlies the film's whimsical twists and turns. **B**

—Christopher McQuinn



Van Wilder star (and Alanis Morissette's fiancé) Ryan Reynolds is the best thing about *Blade: Trinity*. Isn't it ironic?

Ocean's Twelve

People magazine. *Desperate Housewives*. Guilty pleasures involving celebrities are the worst...and the best. Watching Julia Roberts, George Clooney et al. deliver clever camp under the guidance of director Steven Soderbergh in *Ocean's Eleven* felt so cheap, and still so vapidly delicious. But if you're heading to *Ocean's Twelve* expecting more of the same charisma and mindless cookie-cutter heist plot twists, spare yourself the disappointment. The story is weak (who wants to watch millionaire crooks-turned-suburbanites lose, and keep losing, for 90 minutes?), the dialogue is weaker and, unless Brad Pitt compulsively eating and licking his fingers is your idea of a good time, save your 8 bucks. **C-**

—Cori Taratoot

Spanglish

After the false alarm of *Punch-Drunk Love*, Adam Sandler successfully pulls a Tom Hanks/Jim Carrey career makeover as an acclaimed chef torn between his neurotic wife (Téa Leoni) and his immigrant housekeeper (Paz Vega of *Sex and Lucia*, instantly outleaping Penélope Cruz across the language barrier). Not only does writer/director James L. Brooks (*Terms of Endearment*, *Broadcast News*) strike the perfect balance between comedy and drama, his loving film manages to address the Mexican-American divide without taking sides. **A**

—Jim Radosta

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