

## REVIEWS



The *Daredevil* spinoff *Elektra* pits the assassin (Jennifer Garner) against the poisonous Typhoid (Natassia Malthe)

### Assault on Precinct 13

A couple of bitchin' action sequences can't redeem this loud, mind-numbing remake of John Carpenter's 1976 cult classic about a besieged police precinct. Though the original was made on a shoestring budget with no big stars, it is 10 times smarter and scarier than this slick and stupid new offering from director Jean-François Richet. The strong supporting cast includes John Leguizamo as a wisecracking criminal and Drea de Matteo (*The Sopranos*) as the brassy, sex-obsessed precinct secretary. In his

leading role as a police officer, however, Ethan Hawke embodies the insufferably cocky teen-age boy persona that he never seems to outgrow. **C-**  
—Stephen Blair

### The Aviator

Martin Scorsese's biopic about Howard Hughes has all the right stuff to make it Oscar's frontrunner for Best Picture: epic scale (incredible flight sequences), mental illness (obsessive-compulsive disorder) and old Hollywood (Jude Law as Errol Flynn, Kate Beckinsale as Ava Gardner, Cate Blanchett stealing scenes as Katharine Hepburn). It's a grand story about a visionary man; my only quibble is that Leonardo DiCaprio still looks too boyish to be taken seriously as a grown-up. **A**

—Jim Radosta

### Elektra

Spun away from her origins in the *Daredevil* movie (and comic books), Elektra is a morally elusive character: An assassin for hire, she sometimes bumps up against her own ethical center while on the hunt. Jennifer Garner is in fine fighting form in the lead role, and has a believably sweet relationship with a preteen girl who is caught between opposing martial arts clans. *Elektra* is a pleasant two-hour diversion with some wonderful effects and fights, plus Garner locking lips with a femme adversary, and a hunky tattooed villain unleashing his inner animal. **B**

—Andy Mangels

### A Love Song for Bobby Long

More than a quarter-century has passed since John Travolta scored the double-hitter of *Saturday Night Fever* and *Grease*. Well, the devout Scientologist has officially struck out with the double-misser of *Battlefield Earth* and this indie mess. Revolva pulls a full Brando as the title character, a News Orleans hickster drunk ex-college professor who only reminds us of the ex-movie star's long-absent strengths: He limps onto the screen for the opening sequence, he blubbers in a bathroom wearing black briefs, he shuffles his feet in sandals and socks, and he warbles songs by the campfire. At least Scarlett Johansson lights up every scene that's graced by her warm glow. **D+**

—JR

### Racing Stripes

According to Austin Ault, the 8-year-old son of Just Out Advertising Representative Kari Tate, this film about a talking zebra is "really funny." Stripes (voiced by Frankie Muniz of *Malcolm in the Middle*) thinks he's a horse, so when the circus accidentally leaves him behind, he decides to compete in a race, with a little help from his farm friends (including Oscar winners Dustin Hoffman and Whoopi Goldberg). Austin especially liked the part when a fly went up a horse's nose, only to be sneezed back out again. Our young reviewer promises an

"exciting" ending; let's cross our fingers that Stripes wins the mane event! **A+**

—Austin Ault

### Sex Is Comedy

Director Catherine Breillat (*Romance*), usually a dead-serious practitioner of sexually blunt postfeminist cinema, displays a remarkably self-deprecating sense of humor with this autobiographical, fictionalized depiction of the making of a film strongly resembling her celebrated *Fat Girl*. Anne Parillaud plays the Breillat character, an insecure yet egotistical director struggling to bring off the provocative, disturbing sex scene she's written. (Its eventual success is depicted as a literally orgasmic epiphany between the director and her starlet.) Breillat's incisive sendup of her own artistic need to provoke clashing with actorly egos and anatomical props provokes, in its turn, some hearty laughs. **A-**

—Christopher McQuain

### The Woodsman

Real-life husband and wife Kevin Bacon and Kyra Sedgwick: an indie Tracy and Hepburn? This difficult story casts the couple as a paroled pedophile who finds redemption in the arms of a co-worker who's rough yet sympathetic (and possibly bi—when Bacon assumes she's a dyke, she coyly replies, "Not tonight!"). Director Nicole Kassell makes a strong first feature by opting for complex characters instead of easy answers. **A-**

—JR

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