

FILM

REVIEWS

Assisted Living

Now playing at Hollywood Theatre, Elliot Greenebaum's quiet, honest film tells the story of Todd, a 20-something pot-smoking janitor at a nursing home. This quasidocumentary deals honestly with the elderly, asking questions about where the humanity is in these facilities. The unconventional chemistry between Todd and Mrs. Pearlman, who has early Alzheimer's, is an especially wonderful portrait, but the film's best moments are those showing the residents simply living out their days. Greenebaum manages to portray old age as a condition with its own peculiar beauty and considerable grace. **B-**

—Yvonne P. Behrens

Eating Out

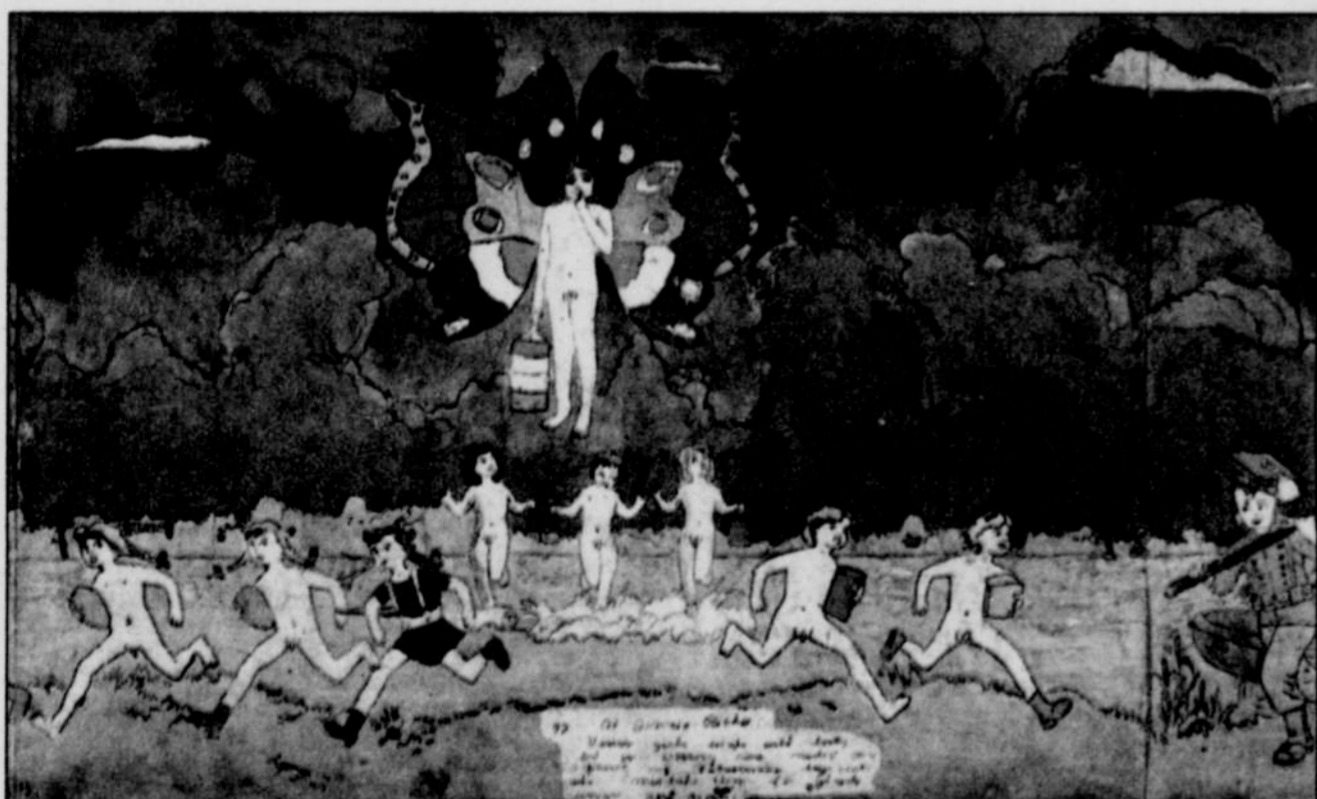
Writer/director Q. Allan Brocka, who has been cracking up queer film festivals for years with his Lego-animated shorts about "Rick & Steve: The Happiest Gay Couple in All the World," brings his wicked sense of humor to this sex comedy opening May 27 at Hollywood Theatre. Caleb (Scott Lunsford) is a straight dude freshly dumped by a kinky woman because

sider—an unbelievably complex epic of seven little girls (often depicted naked and with penises) engaged in relentless, often bloody battles with evil adults.

Darger's life and work are the subjects of Jessica Yu's loving but problematic documentary. We learn much about his troubled history and life, but the director drowns some of the insights with a hammering collage style that shows endless, sometimes repetitive archival imagery from grainy family photos to kitschy Chicago travelogues. Worse, she employed computer artists to crudely animate some of Darger's art. This kind of posthumous collaboration could be justified as a way to bring viewers into Darger's head, but ultimately it feels disrespectful to the integrity of this rarest of artists who worked in utter isolation on his own terms. Screens 7 p.m. May 27 to 29 at Whitsell Auditorium. **A** for intentions, **C** for execution. —Gary Morris

Kingdom of Heaven

Christians battle Muslims for the holy city of Jerusalem in this story of the 12th century Crusades, which tries to view both sides as



Outsider artist Henry Darger's illustrated novel is the subject of the documentary *In the Realms of the Unreal*.

he wasn't aggressive enough in the sack. When gay roommate Kyle (*American Idol* finalist Jim Verraros) suggests he pose as gay in order to attract chicks, Caleb reluctantly agrees to a date with Marc (Ryan Carnes, the hunky gardener on *Desperate Housewives*) in hopes of getting in the pants of his roommate, Gwen (Emily Stiles), a frustrated fag hag whose boyfriends keep going gay on her. The dialogue contains plenty of juicy queer lingo ("Come out or stay in—don't Heche me into a Mariah!"), and a lengthy phone sex scene is full of surprises. The whole thing plays out like extended episode of *Three's Company* with full-frontal nudity. **B+**

—Jim Radosta

In the Realms of the Unreal

Henry Darger (1892-1972) is one of a handful of superstars of the outsider artist genre. An impoverished recluse and possible schizophrenic, he lived in a seedy one-room apartment in Chicago for decades. There, he secretly toiled over *In the Realms of the Unreal*, a monumental novel (15,000 single-spaced pages) illustrated with thousands of gorgeously evocative watercolors. The narrative was classic out-

equal in their idealism. Orlando Bloom plays a French blacksmith who becomes a knight, inherits a Holy Land town from his noble father (Liam Neeson) and defends Jerusalem against legendary Arab hero Saladin (wonderfully portrayed by Syrian star Ghassan Massoud). It all comes to a happy end after 2 1/2 hours—an overall entertaining epic that will live up to your expectations of director Ridley Scott (*Gladiator*). **B-**

—YPB

La Petite Lili

Ludivine Sagnier (*Swimming Pool*) stars as Lili, the love and muse of an idealistic young filmmaker named Julien (Robinson Stévenin). At odds with the serenity of the breathtaking French countryside, Julien rebels against his mother and her guests, specifically her filmmaker lover (Bernard Giraudeau), while multiple intrigues of lust and power play out behind the scenes. Director Claude Miller's (*Alias Betty*) modern adaptation of Chekov's *The Seagull* envelops the viewer with its colorful, lush visuals as the layers of distinction between art and memory are shed into chaos. Now playing at Hollywood Theatre. **B-**

—YPB

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