

FILM

REVIEWS

**The Aristocrats**

Ever wonder how comedians entertain themselves? That's what Paul Provenza sets out to discover in his new documentary. With 100 top-name comedians (including George Carlin, Whoopi Goldberg and Drew Carey) each telling their own version of the same shockingly filthy joke, the movie is a foul-mouthed hoot. Leave your inhibitions at home, and be warned: not for the prudish or squeamish. Opens Aug. 26 at Cinema 21. **A**

—Floyd Sklover

**The Brothers Grimm**

Former genius Terry Gilliam (*Brazil*) continues the losing streak started by the nauseating *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* and an unfinished adaptation of *Don Quixote*. Except for a twisted and hilarious vignette about the genesis of the Gingerbread Man, this is a rambling, unsatisfying blend of darkly lit forest scenes, hokey special effects and "scary" moments that are anything but thrilling. As brothers out to rescue a village from a mean ole witch's curse, Heath Ledger and Matt Damon have so little chemistry that they might as well be sharing Harry Potter's invisibility cloak. **C-**

—Stephen Blair

**The Constant Gardener**

With a complex plot of evil machinations involving conglomerates supplying drugs to AIDS-ravaged Africa and a cover-up by the British government, this conspiracy thriller will



Lesbian comic Judy Gold will make you blush in the filthy documentary *The Aristocrats*.

make your blood boil. Fernando Meirelles (*City of God*) draws excellent performances from his cast, especially Ralph Fiennes and Rachel Weisz. There's also a pivotal character who turns out to be gay. Opens Aug. 31. **B**

—FS

**Dead & Breakfast**

This horror spoof about an RV full of obnoxious travelers has a lot going for it: cute television actors Erik Palladino (*ER*) and Jeremy Sisto (*Six Feet Under*) running for their lives, cool illustrations linking scenes, a curious one-man Greek chorus commenting on the abundant bloodshed...but the physical,

comedy falls flat, and the self-referential lines ("This is like a bad horror movie!") feel all too familiar. Opens Aug. 26 at Hollywood Theatre. **C+**

—Jim Radosta

**The 40-Year-Old Virgin**

Even though it overstays its welcome by about 20 minutes, this tale of an adorable, sexually challenged nerd (Steve Carell) joins *Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle* as one of the best raunchy extravaganzas in recent years. Catherine Keener is at her volatile, daffy best as the love interest. There are gay jokes aplenty, but they're generally sweet-natured and queer-friendly. **A-**

—Stephen Blair

**Junebug**

Anyone who escaped from a stifling small town will identify with this funny, thoughtful examination of the red/blue state divide. Richly detailed and deceptively simple, this story of cosmopolitan newlyweds visiting the husband's Southern family is fraught with dramatic tension and definitely proves "You can't go home again." **B+**

—FS

**Red Eye**

Wes Craven directs this thriller about a woman who discovers the man next to her on

an airplane is plotting terrorist actions...and he's using her as his conduit for murder! Rachel McAdams is tough enough as the heroine, but Cillian Murphy edges into parody by the end of the film. When it's in the air, *Red Eye* is exciting, but once grounded, it nearly comes to a halt. **C+**

—Andy Mangels

**The Skeleton Key**

Kate Hudson stars as a young hospice nurse who takes on the job of caring for an invalid man in a spooky New Orleans mansion, unaware that voodoo and ghosts are plotting against her. Slow at first, this becomes a taut and engaging thriller that features strong acting, excellent visuals and just the right amount of mood and creepiness. A nearly unrecognizable Gena Rowlands, in particular, will haunt your nightmares. **A**

—AM

**Torremolinos '73**

This lighthearted Spanish comedy tells the true story of a young couple struggling to get by on the husband's meager salary as an encyclopedia salesman in Franco-era Spain. Faced with flagging sales, his company decides to retrain its staff to shoot amateur porn for foreign consumption. The awkwardness of the naive, modest couple trying to perform on camera and respond to the bizarre guidance of their employers provides most of the fun. The characters are drawn in broad strokes, but they are likable and well-acted, and the story is consistently interesting if not consistently funny. Opens Aug. 19 at Hollywood Theatre. **B-**

—Michael Burdick

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