

FILM

REVIEWS

Corpse Bride

On the run from an arranged marriage, Victor accidentally weds the reanimated corpse of a jilted bride, but he soon finds that life with the dead might be simpler than romance among the living. Tim Burton's stop-motion animated film is enjoyable, and the vocals by Johnny Depp, Helena Bonham Carter and others are perfect. But comparisons to *The Nightmare Before Christmas* are inevitable, and *Corpse Bride* just isn't as good. It is, however, a great deal more entertaining than most live-action films, and appropriate for all ages. **B**

—Andy Mangels

Elizabethtown

Just in time for Halloween, the ghost of Ed Wood seems to have possessed Cameron Crowe, the writer and director of this shockingly inept black comedy about a suicidal cipher (bland babe Orlando Bloom) who travels from Oregon to Kentucky after losing his job as a shoe designer and losing his father to a heart attack, until a "vivacious" stewardess (Kirsten Dunst) comes along and rocks his world. (*Junebug* and *Garden State* handled similar subject matter much, much better.) Crowe, on a losing streak since 2001's *Vanilla Sky*, substitutes a relentless soundtrack for character development and hopes nobody will notice. Opens Oct. 14. **F+**

—Jim Radosta

Everything Is Illuminated

Actor Liev Schreiber (*The Manchurian Candidate*) wrote and directed this flawed but highly engaging adaptation of Jonathan Safran Foer's celebrated 2002 novel. Elijah Wood, formerly known as Frodo, plays a bookish American Jew who teams up with a blind tour guide and a rambunctious translator to search Ukraine for the woman who saved his grandfather from the Nazis. To avoid getting tangled up in Foer's folk tales and historical digressions, Schreiber leaves out some of the novel's most colorful scenes. But the onscreen footage is handled so well that you can't help but forgive the dodgy script. **A-**

—Stephen Blair

Flightplan

Has lesbian icon Jodie Foster lost her daughter at 30,000 feet, or is she totally honkin' crazy? Find out when you strap yourself



Jodie Foster hits long stretches of turbulence in *Flightplan*.

in for this absurd but rousing thriller about a grieving widow's frantic encounters with possible terrorists and bitchy stewardesses. First-class performances by Foster and Peter Sarsgaard can't quite overcome a screenplay that hits long stretches of turbulence. **B-**

—SB

Ganges: River to Heaven

Award-winning filmmaker Gayle Ferraro (*Anonymously Yours*) directed this wonderful documentary about the final journey of devoted Hindus to the sacred river in India. After watching this film, one wonders if the natural force, polluted from years of overuse, will be strong enough to survive the beliefs of a nation and the adoration of generations to come. The young and the strong purify themselves in the polluted waves, and the old and infirm wait for their death, too weak for that ritual. In time, the Ganges carries their soul, released from the bondage of reincarnation, to heaven. Each part of this film sheds new light on India's evolving society and its unchanging veneration of the Ganges. Opens Oct. 10 at Hollywood Theatre. **A**

—Yvonne P. Behrens

A History of Violence

The latest from David Cronenberg, from a graphic novel by John Wagner and Vince

Locke, is subtler than his prior adaptations (*Crash*, *Naked Lunch*) but equally skewed and disconcerting. Is all-around good guy Tom Stall (Viggo Mortensen)—an unimpeachable small-business owner and family man—really as heroic as he seems, or is there something to suspicions about what may be his pitch-black past? And is violence really so far removed from even the most apparently idyllic human scenarios? The film is a challenging and disquieting meditation on how honest (or hypocritical) we are about the less pleasant, instinctually aggressive parts of human nature. **A**

—Christopher McQuain

A League of Ordinary Gentlemen

If you are a passionate bowler or ever wanted to know anything about professional bowling, you will love this documentary. Imagine this: For 35 years, pro bowling was a television highlight every Saturday afternoon on CBS. Average Americans could identify with these sports heroes because a lot of the viewers were bowlers themselves. But people eventually lost interest in the sport's middle-brow image, and the Professional Bowlers Association lost fans to the National Football League and NASCAR. However, pro bowling might be ready for a comeback: With a new

image created by former Microsoft programmers, it could once again find a huge following. Opens Oct. 10 at Hollywood Theatre. **B**

—YPB

Oliver Twist

Director Roman Polanski and screenwriter Ronald Harwood's follow-up to *The Pianist* is a lushly photographed, well-acted, sometimes dutiful rendition of Charles Dickens' famous story of the mistreated, innocent titular orphan searching for his place in the sinister world of Victorian England. Polanski's version may be a touch too reverential—it tiptoes to the point of enervation at times, and it lacks the particular charm and energy of David Lean's fine film from 1948—but it is a faithful, thoughtful and rather pretty adaptation of a perennially resonant piece of literature. **B**

—CM

Two for the Money

Based on a true story of fame and fortune, this entertaining film takes us into the dangerous world of sports betting. Former college football player Brandon Lang (Matthew McConaughey) has the ability to predict the outcome of games and becomes the most successful handicapping guru in sports betting. Al Pacino is absolutely brilliant as Walter, who hires Lang for his huge sports consulting company and grooms him as his frontman. When Walter's manipulation of his protégé crosses the line, each one tries to win the upper hand. **B**

—YPB

Waiting...

Some insight regarding the indignities of waiting tables, a token lesbian subplot and the re-emergence of *Freaks and Geeks* star John Francis Daley cannot redeem this sophomoric independent comedy—set at an Applebee's-like chain restaurant with a twentysomething wait staff composed of horny boys and ambivalent girls—from its ultimate dumbness. *Waiting...* does, however, raise the question of whether straight guys are as fed up with being depicted as moronic jerks and losers as we gay men are with equivalently shallow cultural stereotypes of us. **D**

—CM jn

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