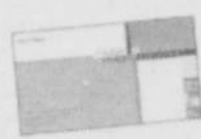


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A show with "a white-hot center." —Michael McGregor, *The Oregonian*

film

Casanova

In Lasse Hallström's *Casanova*, the legendary lech finally falls in love after 10,000 conquests. While the actors, including Heath Ledger (fresh from *Brokeback Mountain*), give convincing performances, the real stars are the glorious city of Venice, where the film was shot, and the magnificent period costumes by Jenny Beavan. **B**

—Floyd Sklover

Garçon Stupide

Loic is a fetching young Swiss homo who works at a chocolate factory, day after day turning out perfect gold-wrapped squares of the tasty treat. At night he works even harder, traveling to Lausanne to pick up male Internet tricks and fucking their brains out. He's attended by a faithful fag hag, Marie, who mothers him and lets him prattle on at numbing length about his one-night stands ("I fucked him. He fucked me. I sucked him. He sucked me." Etc.) And he takes pictures with his camera phone.

But something's amiss in Loic's compact little world. He worries that he's not as bright as he should be. He's never heard of Adolf Hitler, for example, though he tries to remedy the omission by looking up Der Führer in the dictionary.

Less easily remedied is the monotonous pattern of his life—chocolate and tricks, tricks and chocolate. And his world is starting to unravel. Marie gets a boyfriend, which sends the selfish Loic into a rage. Meanwhile, he's getting fed up with the "filthy men" he has sex with and declares he's no longer homosexual. ("It was a bad phase.") And his biological family isn't much help—they're estranged. When he meets a sexy Portuguese soccer player named Rui, what looks like a potential friendship or even romance (Rui isn't "filthy"—he takes baths) becomes yet another complication in an already beleaguered life.

First-time feature director Lionel Baier expertly pulls us inside the head of this self-absorbed, emotionally toxic character, helped not a little by fetching Pierre Chatagny's skillful acting (or being) of the role. The use of digital video rather than film is a plus in giving a sense of immediacy to Loic's blank life, a minus in making it all look a little cheesy—perhaps inevitable with video. *Garçon Stupide* also gets points for its numerous

near-hardcore scenes of *le boy idiotique* banging away in heavenly split-screen. Opens Jan. 27 at Hollywood Theatre. **B+**

—Gary Morris

Glory Road

Another Disney sports movie based on another true story about another underdog basketball team that goes all the way to the top? Even though this sounds familiar, *Glory Road* is different and truly inspiring. With the help and encouragement of passionate coach Don Haskins (Josh Lucas), the first college basketball team with an all-black starting lineup surprisingly wins the NCAA tournament title in 1966—when the country was still full of racial discrimination—and changes sports history forever. **A**

—Yvonne P. Behrens

Last Holiday

Director Wayne Wang (*Smoke*, *Maid in Manhattan*) gives this remake of the 1950 Alec Guinness classic a fashionable new look with a stunning (as usual) Queen Latifah as a woman who finds out she has only a few months to live and decides to tour Europe to make her dreams come true and become the woman she always wanted to be. Yes, it's a feel-good chick flick with a predictable story, but it's a witty and entertaining story with great support from Timothy Hutton and Gérard Depardieu. **A**

—YPB

Looking for Comedy in the Muslim World

Albert Brooks is a funny guy. And his *Looking for Comedy in the Muslim World* is a funny idea. The premise is that the U.S. State Department sends Brooks (as himself) overseas to learn what makes Muslims and Hindus laugh. But after a delightful opening in Hollywood (with a wonderful cameo by Penny "Laverne" Marshall), the film loses momentum (and laughs) once Brooks reaches Asia. **B**

—FS

Nanny McPhee

This film is an enchanting fairy tale for both young and old viewers. A widower (Colin Firth) desperately needs help caring for his seven children,

who just scared their 17th nanny away. He gets magical help when the title character (Emma Thompson, who also wrote this superb adaptation of the *Nurse Matilda* books) enters their life. The excellent supporting cast includes Imelda Staunton, Derek Jacobi and Angela Lansbury as horrible Great Aunt Adelaide. The art direction and visual effects are great, and the score by Patrick Doyle works fabulously with the story. This is good old family entertainment! Opens Jan. 27. **B+**

—YPB



A self-absorbed, emotionally toxic *Garçon Stupide* tries to get smart in Lionel Baier's feature film debut.