

The Real Dirt on Farmer John

John Peterson isn't gay, though you'd never know it from his effeminate manner and his penchant for cross-dressing. Riding a tractor with a boa wrapped around his neck, he looks more like a glam rock icon than a organic farmer who plies his customers with bell peppers and broccoli. This enjoyable, folksy documentary by Taggart Siegel follows Peterson from his childhood on a Midwestern farm to the present, with tales of family tragedies and financial woes along the way. The most interesting scenes take place in the late 1960s, when Peterson turned the farm into an agricultural artist's colony of sorts. Opens Feb. 1 at Cinema 21. **B+**

—Stephen Blair



A male-to-female transsexual (Felicity Huffman) hits the road with Graham Greene in *Transamerica*.

Transamerica

In this year's Best Actress race at the Oscars, Felicity Huffman of *Desperate Housewives* fame deserves to beat the pants off Reese Witherspoon and Judi Dench for her poignant portrayal of a pre-operative male-to-female transsexual named Bree. In a funny and subversive twist on the road movie genre, she discovers she has a son (who happens to be a gay hustler) and drives him cross-country without telling him the truth about their relationship or her gender identity. Huffman is the main attraction, but writer/director Duncan Tucker draws terrific performances from the entire cast, especially Fionnula Flanagan as Bree's flamboyant and stifling mother. **A-**

—SB

Tristan & Isolde

A noble knight (James Franco) falls for the future queen of England (Sophia Myles), who's

about to be married off to another man, in this romantic drama that takes place as Ireland and Britain are at war. Both characters are torn between loyalty, friendship and love. Entertaining but sometimes violent, *Tristan & Isolde* is a nice attempt to tell the classic Celtic love story in another way. **B**

—YPB

Underworld: Evolution

How exactly does one make a war between vampires and werewolves boring...a second time? In this sequel, Kate Beckinsale is a vampire huntress who's trying to protect her vampire-werewolf hybrid boyfriend (Scott Speedman) from other evil vampires. To call this film nonsensical

and convoluted is an understatement, so all you can do is park your brain in the next state and "enjoy" murkily filmed action, barely passable CGI, visuals of a black-leather-clad woman and rough trade blood-covered shirtless men, and lots and lots of blue camera filters. **C-**

—Andy Mangels

Ushpizin

Shuli Rand wrote and stars in this wonderfully humorous look inside the closed world of ultra-

Orthodox Jews in modern-day Israel. *Ushpizin* follows the story of Moshe and Malli, a poor, childless couple who get strange visitors during the celebration of Succoth and need to find out if this is a blessing. The film is a unique opportunity for Western viewers to learn about the customs and rituals practiced in a part of the world that normally is only in the news for its conflicts. Opens Jan. 20 at Hollywood Theatre. **B+**

—YPB

The White Countess

This high-prestige film is the final collaboration between the gay producing/directing team of Ismail Merchant and James Ivory, a 44-year partnership that ended with Merchant's death last year. With a screenplay by novelist Kazuo Ishiguro (*The Remains of the Day*, also adapted by Merchant-Ivory), it boasts three Redgraves: Natasha Richardson, mother Vanessa Redgrave and aunt Lynn Redgrave.

Unfortunately, Ivory (a University of Oregon grad) takes a somnolent approach to this story set in Shanghai on the eve of the Sino-Japanese war. Rich in visual detail and full of potential melodrama, the film dwells on inconsequential backstory without mining the most interesting conflicts. It's fascinating but slow going. Opens Jan. 27. **B**

—FS jo



From left, Ralph Fiennes, Oregon native James Ivory, Hiroiyuki Sanada and the late Ismail Merchant on the set of *The White Countess*.

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"The brooding, beautiful and ultimately redemptive story of sex, more sex and - just maybe - love."

Jessica Reaves, CHICAGO TRIBUNE

"In every way, an astute, fresh and confident work."

Kevin Thomas, LOS ANGELES TIMES

"(Pierre) Chatagny is adorable, and he smartly portrays (his character's) erotic and emotional awakening in this poignant film."

Gary M. Kramer, OUT MAGAZINE

"Raw, uncompromising & surprisingly explicit."

Ken Fox, TV GUIDE'S MOVIE GUIDE

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Brandon Voss, HX MAGAZINE

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