

film

Failure to Launch

It's not even summer yet, but here come the light movies that are entertaining while watching them but forgettable afterward. Tom Dey (*Shanghai Noon*) directed this nice date movie about a mid-30s guy (Matthew McConaughey, once again showing off his great abs) who still lives with his parents and hires a "professional" coordinator (Sarah Jessica Parker) to finally get him out of the house. It thrives on the likability of the lead actors and has a lot of slapstick filmed in pretty locations. Too bad the extremely talented Kathy Bates once again is wasted as McConaughey's mother. Opens March 10. **B-**

—Yvonne P. Behrens

Illusion

Inspired by Pierre Corneille's 17th century French comedy *L'Illusion Comique* and reconceived in modern times by actor/director Michael Goorjian, *Illusion* is a complex film that describes lost relationships rediscovered. Kirk Douglas delivers an unforgettable performance as a dying movie director who reflects on his life and wants to reconnect with a son he hasn't seen for 30 years. Wouldn't we all like the opportunity to rewrite something about our lives? *Illusion* takes that idea to a new level. Now playing at Hollywood Theatre. **B+**

—YPB

Neil Young: Heart of Gold

Set in Nashville's historic Ryman Auditorium, Jonathan Demme's intimate concert film makes you feel like you're sitting in Neil Young's living room and he's playing especially for you. Backed by spectral songstress Emmylou Harris and other musicians, he starts off with songs from his latest album, *Prairie Wind*, and transitions to standbys like "Harvest Moon" and "Old Man." The fact that Young recently bounced back from a brain aneurysm makes the show all the more poignant. But if you're not a diehard fan, you might find that the set list seems to stretch on forever. **B+**

—Stephen Blair

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 an 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. Now playing at Hollywood Theatre. **B+**

—SB

The Shaggy Dog

Tim Allen plays Dave Douglas, who accidentally gets infected with a top-secret genetic mutation serum that transforms him from time to time into a dog. Directed by Brian Robbins (*Good Burger*), this remake of a Disney classic from 1959 starring Fred MacMurray tries to tell the old tale in a new light with contemporary humor, digital technology, innovative animatronic puppets and real animal stars. But while it was nice entertainment in the '50s, this dumbed-down version just doesn't work. At least Robert Downey Jr. is great as the evil villain, as is Kristin Davis as Allen's wife. Opens March 10. **C+**

—YPB

Tristram Shandy: A Cock and Bull Story

Much less an adaptation of Laurence Sterne's 18th century novel than an encapsulation of its self-referential spirit, Michael Winterbottom's (*24 Hour Party People*) film plays like *The Office* set in the low-budget, British film world. Most of it consists of behind-the-scenes "documentary" footage of the embattled shoot of a *Tristram Shandy* film, where general haplessness, self-delusion and petty egotism (especially that of star Steve Coogan, who sends himself up hilariously) run rampant. As "literary adaptations" go, this one's decidedly more for the BBC America crowd than the PBS audience; like Sterne's novel, it cheerfully, thoroughly undermines its pretensions in a successful quest for laughs. Now playing at Hollywood Theatre. **B+**

—Christopher McQuain

Winter Passing

Anyone for a bleak tale about a miserable young woman who confronts a family history marred by neglect and suicide? Ingmar Bergman can pull this sort of thing off, but writer/director Adam Rapp's screenplay is as dull as dirt. It doesn't help matters that the leading actors—Zooey Deschanel, Ed Harris and Will Ferrell—deliver subpar performances. There are a few flashes of wit and insight, but otherwise the film plods along slowly and predictably. Opens March 10. **C-**

—SB



Matthew McConaughey (left) stars in the entertaining yet forgettable *Failure to Launch*.

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