

film

Art School Confidential

Five years ago director Terry Zwigoff and comic book writer Daniel Clowes brought us *Ghost World*, one of the smartest American comedies in years. Their uneven follow-up collaboration pales by comparison, but it's still edgy and funny for much of its running time. Max Minghella plays an idealistic art student who begrudgingly resorts to ass kissing and amoral behavior to get ahead. The supporting cast is a hoot, particularly John Malkovich as a nutty professor and Jim Broadbent as a down-and-out reject from the art world. Opens May 12. **B**

—Stephen Blair

Before the Fall

Set in 1942, this coming-of-age movie takes place in an elite military national-political school set up to turn promising young Germans into potential future leaders for the Third Reich. One of these students is Friedrich (Max Riemelt), a talented boxer who develops a homoerotic friendship with fellow poetry-writing academic Albrecht (Tom Schilling), the son of the local Nazi governor. The film shows the unraveling of compassion and the corruptive nature of nationalism. Opens May 12 at Hollywood Theatre. **A**

—Yvonne P. Behrens

The Devil and Daniel Johnston

Music and mental illness collide in this fascinating documentary about Daniel Johnston, an artist and singer-songwriter whose fans include Beck, Sonic Youth and the late Kurt Cobain. Combining

interviews, audio recordings and home movies, director Jeff Feuerzeig follows the gifted and troubled artist from his childhood in West Virginia to his brief glory days in the 1980s music scene of Austin, Texas. Though manic-depression sabotaged his initial quest for stardom, Johnston is now working his way back from the brink à la Brian Wilson of The Beach Boys. Opens May 12 at Cinema 21. **A-**

—SB

Far Side of the Moon

Despite some truly inventive moments, this Canadian feature falls short of *Adaptation*, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* and other trippy cerebral comedies that it emulates. Based on a one-man play by Robert Lepage of Cirque de Soleil fame, the film portrays a struggling science scholar who's convinced that narcissism is the driving force behind space exploration. Lepage plays the main character and his gay brother, a successful weatherman. There's no shortage of intriguing concepts, but few of them achieve an explosive liftoff. Plays May 12 to 14 at Whitsell Auditorium. **B**

—SB

The Promise

The most expensive film in Chinese history, *The Promise* is a beautiful fairy tale about destiny. The movie has all the right ingredients—a beauti-



Two young Germans develop a homoerotic friendship in the coming-of-age movie *Before the Fall*.

ful princess, a courageous slave, a mighty warrior and an evil valiant—intertwined in a story of love, glory and our ability to change fate by choice. The camera roams through a colorful world of breathtaking visuals, both real and CGI, allowing the viewer to be absorbed by the film. Forget reality for a while and just enjoy this martial art fantasy. **A**

—YPB

The Sentinel

This political thriller by director Clark Johnson (S.W.A.T.) and writer George Nolfi (*Ocean's Twelve*) takes a lot of twists and turns in telling the story of a special agent (Michael Douglas, returning after a long absence from the screen) who tries to uncover a conspiracy to kill the president. Although the film is typical and sometimes predictable, it still keeps viewers on the edge of their seats as it touches on issues such as loyalty, both professional and personal. **B**

—YPB

Silent Hill

A distraught mother visits the ghost town of Silent Hill to try to get to the bottom of her daughter's nightmares. Pursuing them is a female motorcycle cop wearing the most form-fitting outfit ever. What they find is a town full of monsters, killer

insects, witch-burning traumatized survivors, creepy-but-sexy faceless zombie nurses and lots of peeling paint and barbed wire. Extremely stylized and relentlessly gory at its end, *Silent Hill* (which is based on a video game) plays like a combination of *Hellraiser* meets *The Sixth Sense* in *Dante's Inferno*. **C+**

—Andy Mangels

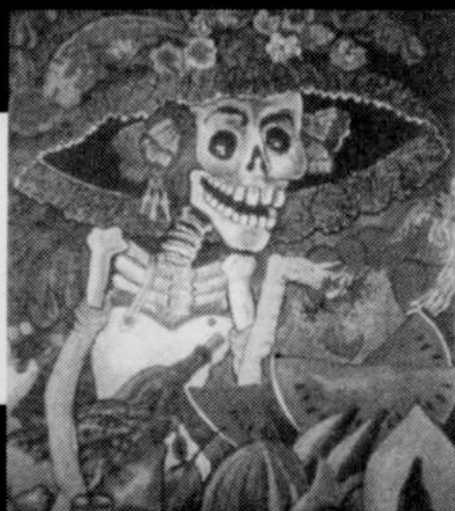
Stick It

After struggling with the law, a rebellious 17-year-old (Missy Peregrin) is forced to return to the regimented world of competitive gymnastics in this film from writer/director Jessica Bendinger (*Bring It On*). Enrolled in an elite program, she struggles to fit in, but like most of these movies, it all works out at the end when she finds an ally in her trainer (Jeff Bridges). Entertaining teen comedy for the upcoming summer days, with some funny dialogue and a few breathtaking shots. **B-**

—YPB jo

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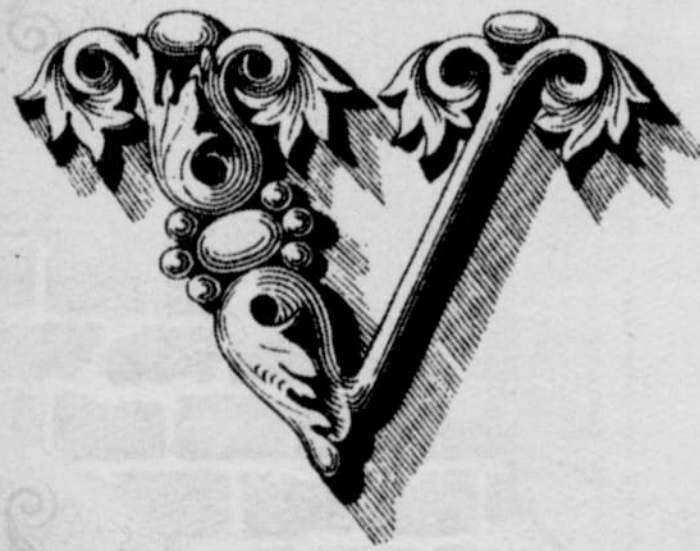
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