

film

The Break-Up

This romantic comedy from director Peyton Reed (*Down with Love*) is a predictable, feel-good chick flick, but it is not as bad as you might think. A funny, witty and beautiful Jennifer Aniston plays Brooke, who breaks up with her boyfriend Gary (Vince Vaughn), but neither one wants to move out of the condo they share. Continuing to live as hostile roommates, they each try to get rid of the other person and we follow them through their attempts until the (happy) end. Their on-screen chemistry works, and if you keep your expectations low, you will be surprisingly well-entertained. **B-**

—Yvonne P. Behrens

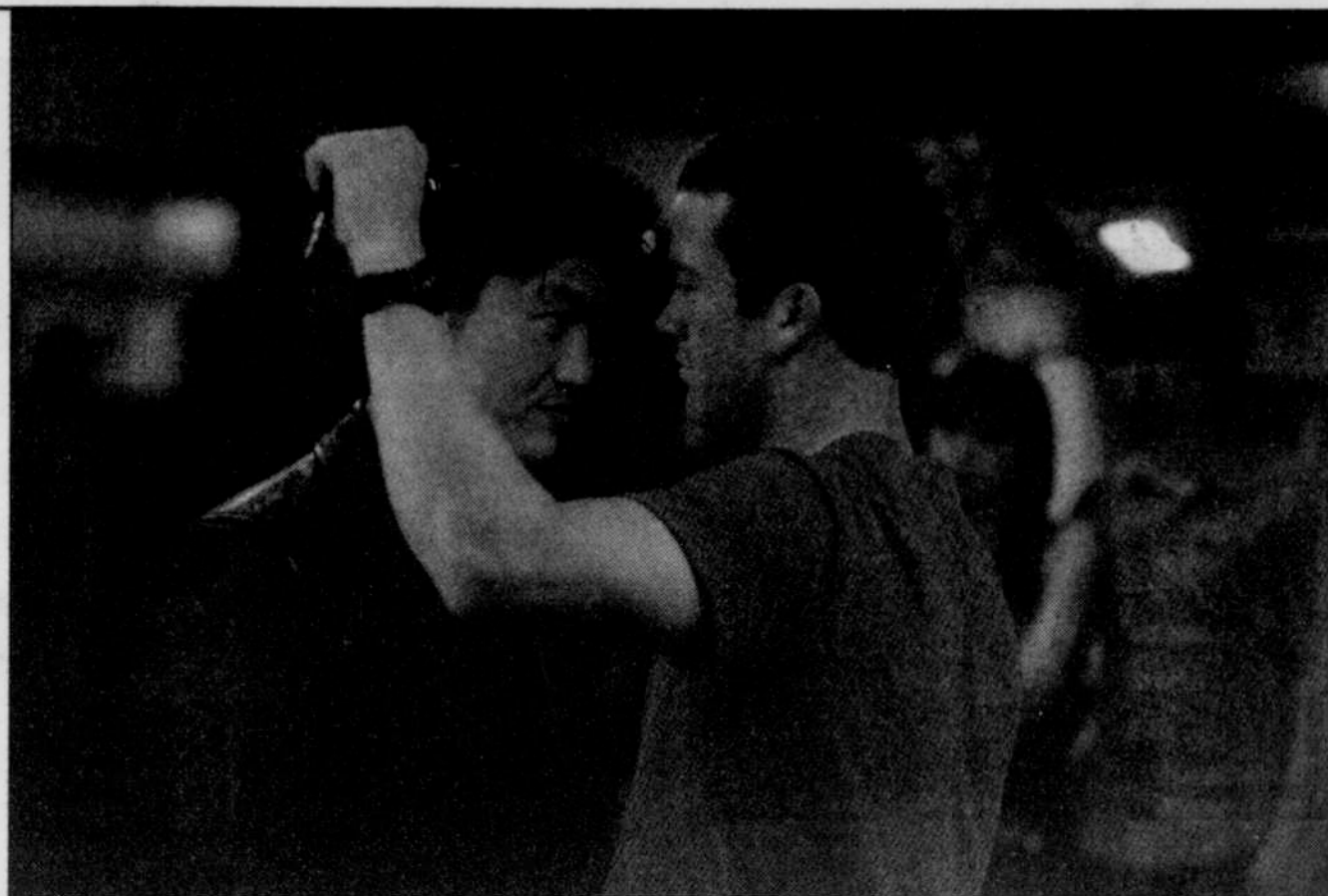
The Da Vinci Code

Director Ron Howard delivers a faithful but uninspired adaptation of Dan Brown's best-selling potboiler about a Harvard symbologist's quest for the Holy Grail. There's plenty of intrigue early on, including a self-flagellating albino monk and a dead body exhibit at the Louvre. Just when your pulse starts to race, convoluted dialogue and hokey historical re-enactments spoil the fun. It doesn't help that Tom Hanks and Audrey Tautou (*Amélie*) are less charismatic than cardboard in the leading roles. At least Sir Ian McKellen makes the most of his turn as a bitchy scholar. **C+**

—Stephen Blair

Keeping Up with the Steins

This excruciating exercise in ethnic comedy desperately wants to be the Jewish version of *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, but it misfires on every



Even though *Just Out* wasn't able to send a critic to the screening, we're amped for the homoerotic subtext of *The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift*.

imaginable level. Daryl Sabara (*Spy Kids*) plays a shy 13-year-old caught up in his wealthy parents' scheme to throw him an extravagant bar mitzvah party at Dodger Stadium. Scott Marshall's aimless direction makes ace comic actor Jeremy Piven (*Entourage*) look like an amateur as the kid's father, and Daryl Hannah and Doris Roberts fare no better in their supporting roles. **D-**

—SB

The Lake House

This romantic time-traveling chick flick from director Alejandro Agresti (*Valentín*) reunites *Speed* stars Sandra Bullock and Keanu Reeves, whose on-screen chemistry makes up for the some-

times slow-moving pace. Both of their characters occupy the titular house at one point and start exchanging letters, only to find out they are living two years apart from each other. It might be hard to believe, but the characters are what make it believable all the way to the happy ending. **B**

—YPB

The Omen

Thirty years after creepy little Damien was first dubbed the Antichrist, filmmakers have dipped into the well for a remake. *The Omen* is extremely faithful to the original, with the addition of better effects, more gore, the acting of Liev Schreiber and a casting coup with Mia Farrow as the Satanic

nanny. Other than two major jumps and a few minor ones, this slow-moving horror flick otherwise barely raises the pulse, and *Armageddon* crawls forward toward an inevitable sequel remake. **C+**

—Andy Mangels

X-Men: The Last Stand

Fans of superhero movies will find plenty to love in this latest installment of the *X-Men* series—it's got plenty of explosions, heated battles, groovy superpowers, sexy costumes and a dash of relationship angst. When a "cure" is found for the mutant gene, the already divided mutant community is fractured further. *Rush Hour* director Brett Ratner takes over from Bryan Singer, who left to direct *Superman Returns*. Unfortunately, Ratner isn't known for his nuance, giving precedence to noisy effects sequences, wanton property destruction and groan-inducing dialogue. At a jam-packed 104 minutes, the film could have been longer and given time to developing and justifying the relationships between characters.

Still, there's plenty to love for *X-Men* fans and new viewers. Notable newcomers include Vinnie Jones as the obnoxious Juggernaut and Kelsey Grammer as the big, blue diplomat Beast. There are some shocking surprises and lovely visual effects that guarantee you won't take your eyes off the screen.

The best popcorn movie of the year so far has arrived, though it's a shame it isn't as good as the first two films in the franchise. Let's see if *Superman Returns* is any better. **B**

—Jemiah Jefferson 10

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