

## film

## Away from Her

Canadian actress Sarah Polley (*The Sweet Hereafter*) makes her directing debut with this heartbreaking adaptation of a short story by Alice Munro. Still radiant at 65, Julie Christie plays an Alzheimer's patient who, to her husband's dismay, develops an intimate bond with a man at her residential care facility. Some of the opening scenes feel choppy, but Polley finds her rhythm and admirably avoids the disease movie clichés that a lesser talent would undoubtedly heap on this material. Gordon Pinsent, Olympia Dukakis and Michael Murphy round out the cast. **A-**

—Stephen Blair

## Burnt Chocolate Water

Portland filmmaker Jeff Grinta *really* doesn't like coffee, and his documentary is a 90-minute quest for a cup of the "foul brew" good enough to change his mind. He drives through seven coffee shacks and 17 Starbucks, visits expert brewers and self-roasters, and even tries a cup of civet coffee—a bizarre luxury, being coffee beans extracted from the poop of Indonesian civet cats, then exported for \$200 a pound to insane coffee addicts who claim the partially digested beans are less bitter. Grinta interviews a good selection of coffee lovers, coffee haters, addiction counselors and industry insiders, but the question remains why, in the words of one of his subjects, "you're so interested in something you're not interested in." Opens May 18 at Hollywood Theatre. **B**

—Tony LeTigre

## Georgia Rule

This movie was not at all what I expected. Lindsay Lohan, who will probably be judged as simply playing herself, leads a stellar cast playing Rachel, a rebellious teenager who is shipped off by her mother (Felicity Huffman) to her grandmother (Jane Fonda) to learn discipline. She turns the Mormon town of Hull upside down, and just when you think you know where the film is going, it will surprise you. Director Garry Marshall (*Pretty Woman*) does a wonderful job in dealing with the extremely sensitive issue of sexual abuse, the fine line that separates the truth from lies and the unbreakable bond of motherhood. This R-rated film is definitely not your regular nice chick flick! **A-**

—Yvonne P. Behrens

## The Great Communist Bank Robbery

This fascinating film documents *Reconstruction*, an hourlong black-and-white film about a robbery at

Bucharest's Romanian National Bank in 1959. During this time of Stalinism, the crime rate was extremely low, so it shook everybody when the robbery occurred. Even more strange, the Lei currency could only be spent in Romania. The state police searched the whole country, arrested six people they declared to be guilty and forced the prisoners to play themselves in a film that reconstructed the crime and the investigation. At the end of their trial, which was filmed live, they were sentenced to death and executed. A month later, the film *Reconstruction* was released and became a sensation throughout the country. Today the robbery remains unsolved, and director Alexandru Solomon does an incredible job in interweaving archival footage from *Reconstruction* with modern-day interviews of witnesses. Opens May 19 at Hollywood Theatre. **A-**

—YPB

## The Iceberg

This is a quirky, charming indie comedy from Belgium about a restaurant owner, Fiona, who accidentally locks herself in the walk-in freezer overnight. Somehow this accident triggers a midlife crisis that leads her to forsake her Mr. Bean-like husband and family for a deaf-mute ursine sailor named René with a tiny sloop called "Le Titanique." Appealing to the eye, with lots of cobalt blue, fire-engine red and icy white, and suffused with soufflé-light, slapstick wit. Lucy Tūlugarjuk, in her supporting role as a radiantly cheerful Inuit Eskimo, is adorable. Now playing at Living Room Theaters. **B**

—TL

## Shrek the Third

Few film franchises are as successful at blending comedy, music and messages as the *Shrek* films do. In this outing, Shrek searches for the young kind heir to the throne, while the scheming Prince Charming rounds up an army of villains to take over. Better than *Shrek 2*, this film has less product placement, a wide variety of new characters and returning favorites along with some fantastic set pieces with Puss in Boots and Donkey, a nightmare full of babies and a fairy tale high school not far removed from reality. Excellent fun for everyone. **A+**

—Andy Mangels

## Snow Cake

An exceptionally effective and moving indie with a wealth of star power, *Snow Cake* explores themes of grief, guilt, alienation and strange friendship—and only occasionally veers into Very Special Episode territory. Sigourney Weaver brings nuance



Cillian Murphy (left, with Pádraic Delaney) smartly picked the award-winning *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* instead of the execrable sequel *28 Weeks Later*.

and craft to her carefully researched portrayal of a high-functioning autistic woman, but the real powerhouse performance of the film belongs to Alan Rickman, whose character's perfectly delivered sarcasm masks a vast well of loneliness, gradually broken down by Weaver's childlike, matter-of-fact, obsessive-compulsive *joie de vivre*. While some details strain credibility, the emotional impact is genuine. *Snow Cake* is a thinking person's tearjerker. Opens May 18 at Hollywood Theatre. **A-**

—Jemiah Jefferson

## Spider-Man 3

The third time is not the charm for writer/director Sam Raimi, who spins so many plot webs that you can barely tell who's fighting whom by the final reel. Thanks to a \$258 million budget, the special effects are eye-popping, and there's a smattering of standout performances from James Franco, Rosemary Harris and Bruce Campbell. But tossing three villains into the mix has a curiously dampening effect on the action, and Peter Parker's journey to the "dark side" is too goofy to be even remotely menacing, plus his stuttering romance with Mary Jane climbs to new heights of insipidness. **B-**

—SB

## 28 Weeks Later

Cillian Murphy and Naomie Harris wisely refused to have anything to do with this execrable sequel to the film that made them international stars in 2003.

Anyone who thinks it's better than *28 Days Later* ate too many paint chips as a child. The original film broke new ground for the zombie genre, which seemed to have nowhere left to go but self-parody; it was *intelligently* apocalyptic and even a little sexy. *28 Weeks Later's* hip soundtrack and occasional moments of artful restraint—a restaurant poster that says, "Our pizzas are always delivered on time!" or a huge stadium of empty, blood-red chairs, months after the entire population of England has been decimated by the "rage virus"—are ultimately squandered on a senseless, brutal and stupid film. **C-**

—TL

## The Wind That Shakes the Barley

It's 1920, rural Ireland. Damien (Cillian Murphy, the fabulous drag queen from *Breakfast with Pluto*) is a med student visiting his Irish village from London. His brother Teddy (Padraic Delaney) is a guerrilla fighter battling Britain's famously vicious Black and Tan squads. When the B&T's commit atrocities on some "filthy Irish"—Damien and Eddy's friends and neighbors—the brothers are sucked into a series of events that eventually pit them against each other. Ken Loach's 2006 film won the top award at Cannes last year, and for good reason. Beautifully acted and stunningly shot, this meticulously realistic historical drama resonates as an unmistakable allegory of the Iraq disaster. Opens May 25 at Hollywood Theatre. **A**

—Gary Morris 10

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