

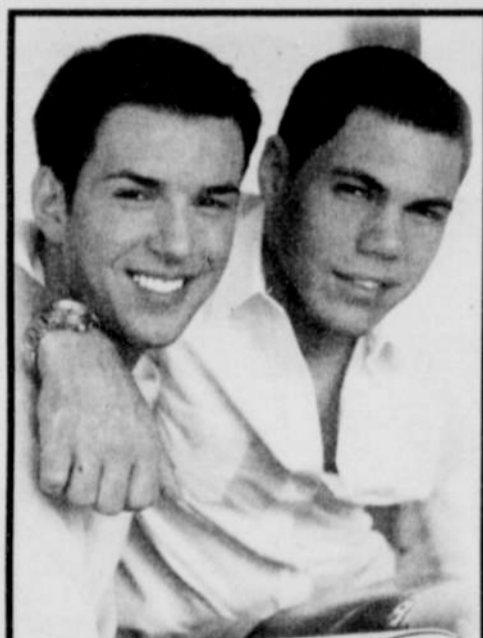
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The Uncommon DenominationSM

film

Beyond Hatred

Opening June 22 at Living Room Theaters, the slow-paced French film *Beyond Hatred* documents a family's grief set against the backdrop of the turning gears of justice.

In 2002, Francois Chenu walked through a park where a gang of three Neo-Nazis lay in wait to "do an Arab" but settled instead on "doing" a homosexual. After he refused to deny his sexuality, the three men brutally beat him and threw him in a river. The film centers on the family's grief, beginning two years after the murder against the backdrop of the trial.

In accordance with French law, the three assailants are never shown on camera. The film steadfastly avoids sensationalizing the lurid details of the attack. Rather, the narrative highlights the Chenu family and their journey to transcend grief, going beyond hatred and ultimately toward forgiveness. Using language invoking society, the state and other lofty abstractions, the family not only appear to fully grieve, but also extend the hand of forgiveness and reconciliation to the very men who brutally murdered their son. Further, the film casts the victim's resistance—he screamed that the men were "cowards" as they killed him—in heroic light. More broadly, his life and the family's values of tolerance are contrasted against the insular, xenophobic reality of the criminals. The film also takes care to explore the issues of class and access to education at the root of intolerant ideology.

That said, *Beyond Hatred* lacks a strong emotional center. It remains as cold and detached as American documentaries are partisan and vitriolic. The omniscient style of the film helps raise greater questions of violence, criminal justice and grieving without providing any easy answers. Thus the riddles raised in the film about the precious nature of human life and the importance of social sanction for hate crimes act like Zen koans teasing out an understanding of the subject by taking the viewer through several different points of view. Any emotion incurred in the process is entirely by mistake. **B+**

—Nick Pell

Day Watch

This sequel to the Russian dark-fantasy cult hit *Night Watch* is a great popcorn movie for intellectuals, film buffs and those who like a little complexity with their explosions and car chases. Like its predecessor, the best thing about the film is the subtitles. Not simply text on the bottom of the screen, the subtitles are *alive*—bouncing, changing color and

reacting to both the visual and auditory atmosphere. The movie also has some genuinely hot (if somewhat arbitrary) girl-on-girl action and breathtaking special effects. Too bad it stops making sense about an hour in. **A-**

—Jemiah Jefferson

Knocked Up

The tagline for 2007's funniest movie is "What if this guy got you pregnant?" and I know bear lovers who'll be lining up around the block to (ahem) bear Seth Rogen's love child. This hilarious concoction finds a hefty nerd getting lucky one night with a gorgeous E! reporter (friend to gays Katherine Heigl), only to get her pregnant. As she struggles to hold her world together, he struggles to become a man, and the audience will struggle to hear the dialogue over the gales of laughter. I haven't laughed till I cried for a long time, yet *Knocked Up* got three sets of tears out of me. Both Rogen and Heigl knock this one up into the stratosphere, and Rogen strikes a beautiful blow for real guys onscreen and off. **A+**

—Andy Mangels

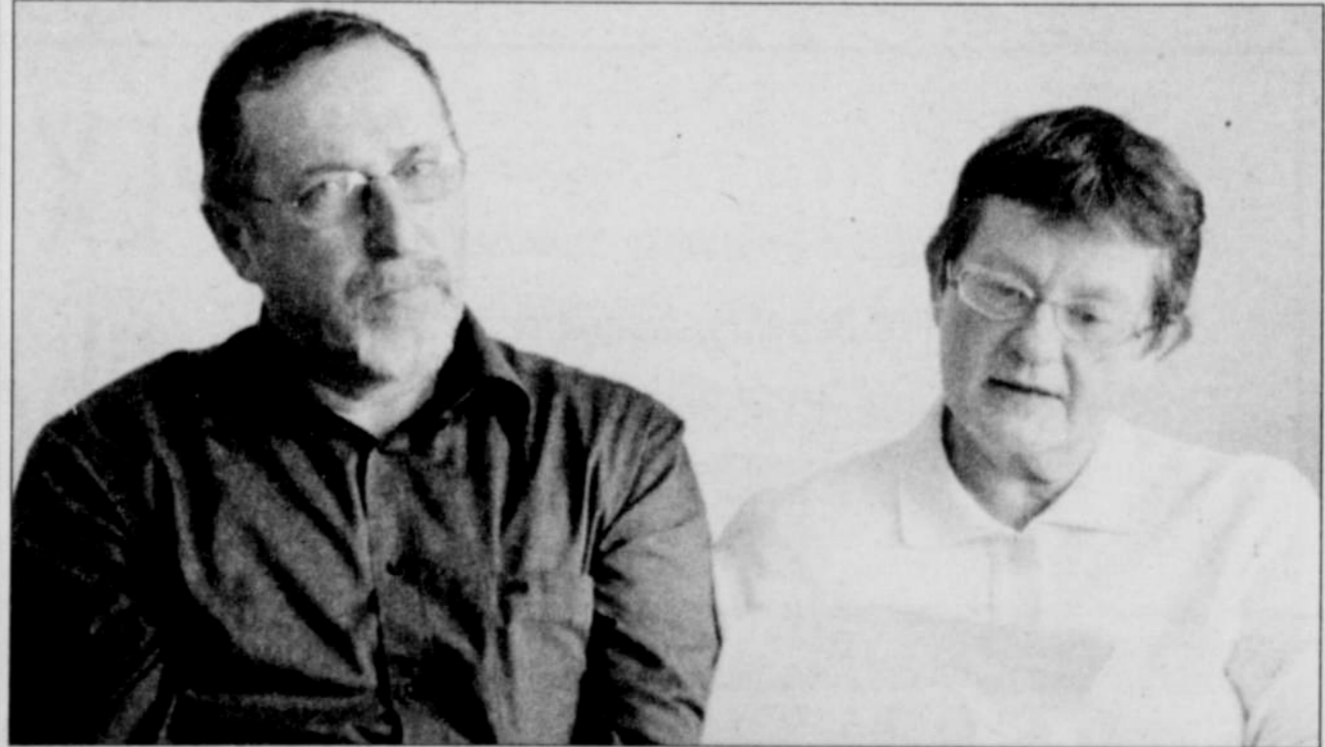
La Vie en Rose

Even if you think you've had it with biopics about musicians who escape squalid childhoods to become rich and famous substance abusers, you should give this portrait of French singer Edith Piaf a whirl for the great tunes and Marion Cotillard's powerhouse performance. In nonchronological sequence, writer/director Olivier Dahan depicts Piaf's career highlights and the tumultuous lifestyle that led to her early death, concluding that her love for the bottle and the needle forever thwarted her search for romantic love. The lavish concert halls and the Parisian fashions provide delicious eye candy. Still, a more concise editing job would have trimmed a welcome 30 minutes off this long and exhausting saga. Opens June 29 at Cinema 21. **B+**

—Stephen Blair

The Long Goodbye

Elliott Gould was born to play the 1970s incarnation of private investigator Philip Marlowe in Robert Altman's endearing adaptation of the Raymond Chandler novel. Altman substitutes Chandler's hard-boiled detective stylings with a leisurely paced story and slapstick comedy—including a scene of future California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger stripping down to his tight yellow skivvies. Nina Van Pallandt, Sterling Hayden and



A French documentary explores a grieving family's journey to move *Beyond Hatred*.