



Queer Portland filmmaker Todd Haynes directs Charlotte Gainsbourg in *I'm Not There*.

the belief that Dylan is an unfathomably complex, mythical figure.

Before the cameras rolled, *I'm Not There* generated monster buzz as a result of an audacious casting maneuver. Like Todd Solondz's *Palindromes*, Haynes uses multiple actors to portray various aspects of Dylan's identity. For the most part he avoids a chronological narrative by crosscutting between the different storylines.

Child actor Marcus Carl Franklin gets the ball rolling as "Woody," an itinerant black boy who—like Dylan—is highly influenced by Woody Guthrie. Christian Bale, Heath Ledger, Ben Whishaw and Cate Blanchett play the singer/songwriter at various points in the 1960s, while a scruffy Richard Gere rides around on a horse in

a tedious segment that pays homage to Dylan's fascination with Billy the Kid.

All the performances are solid, but Blanchett is the most intriguing of the bunch. This is not simply because it's a novelty to see her in drag. In fact, she captures Dylan's nervous mannerisms so perfectly that you instantly forget he's a she. Blanchett won Best Actress honors at the Venice Film Festival for the role, and she's already a frontrunner for an Oscar.

Unfortunately, Blanchett and her co-stars can't make up for the unengaging storytelling—or the off-putting feeling that you'd have to study every scrap of Dylan esoterica and memorize all his lyrics to really "get" the movie.

The tone of the movie shifts so much that it becomes hard to tell when Haynes is joking and when he's deadly serious. In interview footage, Julianne Moore plays a character based on Joan Baez. The phony folk concert photos that accompany her recollections look like they're straight out of a Christopher Guest sendup. I enjoyed the comic relief, but the lack of laughter from fellow viewers made me wonder if this was supposed to be a joke or a yet another reverent bow at the Dylan altar. **C**

—SB

The Life of Reilly

Actor, comedian, television personality and perennial *Tonight Show* guest Charles Nelson Reilly is in danger of being forgotten, which is a shame. Even those fans familiar with his presence on *Hollywood Squares*, *The Match Game*, *The X-Files* and (dear God) *Lidsville* might not know any of the details of his frankly extraordinary life and his unwavering commitment to life as an entertainer despite discouragement, bigotry and mind-boggling tragedy.

Part biopic, part monologue, part stage play, *The Life of Reilly* presents the last public performance of his acclaimed one-man show. He hilariously and poignantly describes his early life: childhood in the Bronx, excitement upon getting the lead role in the fourth-grade school play, surviving the Hartford

Circus Fire of 1944 and studying acting with Uta Hagen. He only briefly, but powerfully, refers to the homophobia he experienced as an actor—"They don't let queers on television," a casting executive tells him—but he shrugs it off with grace, happy to prove that prediction wrong thousands of times. Something tells me there was more, but it was cut for time.

This incredible performance makes for a great concert film, but in trimming down the three-hour performance to a 90-minute movie, the story feels incomplete. The film should really be named *The Early Life of Reilly*, because only the stories of his childhood and his beginnings as an acting student are explored in any depth. It seems too much like the fascinating details of his later life as a television personality were left on the cutting-room floor. As this is the only document of his stage show—and the fullest exploration of his life and history that exists on film—it's a shame to wonder exactly what salacious tidbits might have been included about *The Tonight Show* and how exactly he got that *X-Files* gig. Alas, Reilly correctly announces at the start of this film that he is in his "twilight years"—he passed away in May—and now this film is the last and best portrait of this masterful entertainer. Opens Nov. 24 at Hollywood Theatre. **A-**

—Jemiah Jefferson

Mr. Magorium's Wonder Emporium

Writer/director Zach Helm (*Stranger Than Fiction*) brings us the fantastic story of Mr. Magorium (beautifully played by Dustin Hoffman), an eccentric 243-year-old man who owns a magical toy store. He is tired of life and wants to let go of it, but when the toys hear of his plans to quit, they rebel. While Mr. Magorium tries to pass the store on to his loyal employee Molly (Natalie Portman), the toys drive all the customers away. The special effects and magical scenes are nice, but if Hoffman and Portman weren't so brilliant in their performances, the film would've flopped. **B**

—YPB

No Country for Old Men

This bloody adaptation of Cormac McCarthy's novel is an instant Coen Brothers classic that invites comparisons to *Fargo* and *Blood Simple*. Joel and Ethan are faithful to the source material, but they graciously lighten up the book's dour tone with dozens of quirky flourishes. The acting is tops, with Javier Bardem as a homicidal maniac with bad hair, Josh Brolin as a dim fellow who runs for his life after stealing a bundle of cash and Tommy Lee Jones as an honest small-town sheriff who tries to make sense of all the murder and mayhem. **A**

—SB

Southland Tales

If writer/director Richard Kelly set out to make a cable-TV-obsessed, sci-fi 21st century take on *It's a Mad Mad Mad Mad World*, he succeeded in spades. Otherwise, I am at a loss to explain why he ever thought that this movie would succeed. Perhaps he thought that a cast with Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, Sarah Michelle Gellar, Justin Timberlake and Bai Ling would at least rope in a few celebrity rubbernecks and that the *Donnie Darko* fans would check it out. Unfortunately, there's not enough character to support the ponderous story, and the laughs are mostly of disbelief. Plenty of those, though. **C-**

—JJ



The Life of Reilly documents the last public performance of Charles Nelson Reilly's acclaimed one-man show.

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