

# film

## Let The Right One In

Tenebrous, occasionally gruesome, but with moments of arresting beauty, this Swedish miracle breathes new death into the vampire cliché. Oskar, a cherry-lipped, snow-haired schoolboy bullied by his peers, becomes enamored of Eli, a strange girl who moves into his building. She can scale walls like Spider-Man, can solve a Rubik's Cube with hardly an effort and seems to have a thirst for human blood. There is something "queer" about their warped love story, especially when you consider that Eli (who says, "I am not a girl" more than once) may represent Oskar's revenge-fantasy version of himself. Now playing at Cinema 21. **A**

—Tony LeTigre

## Quantum of Solace

Daniel Craig, the latest (and sexiest) of the James Bonds, has been airlifted into a thoroughly mundane movie. One expects the plot of a Bond film to be incomprehensible. But one also expects the latest in gadgetry, chase scenes that thrill and passionate sparks between Bond and his bimbo du jour. Here, as with the special effects, there is nothing particularly new, fresh or exciting. This sequel to Craig's first Bond incarnation, the terrific *Casino Royale*, is a losing hand. **C**

—Floyd Sklover



**Tru Loved** is both a convincing message movie about living authentically.

## Tru Loved

Writer/director Stewart Wade's *Tru Loved* became a cause célèbre after a recent review by Roger Ebert, who trashed it with a one-star rating based on watching a mere eight minutes of a DVD screener. The resulting uproar triggered some lively discussions on Ebert's blog about the ethics of film critics. But maybe the laugh is on him. Despite his negative attitude toward it, the controversy has no doubt benefited the film by calling so much attention to it. Some of Ebert's mistakes based on reading the Internet Movie Database (like saying Bruce Vilanch played two characters) have also given *Tru Loved* a bit of a David vs. Goliath patina.

Readers who followed the debate but have actually seen the film may wonder what all the fuss was about, particularly Ebert's inexplicable charge (based on a stylized opening fantasy sequence) that *Tru Loved* is an incompetent film. A full viewing shows that, while it is no masterpiece and surely has its problems, the film is not just professionally made, but an often winning mix of comedy, drama and social commentary, making up in heart what it lacks in subtlety. (Ebert's charge of incompetence is a curious one not echoed in the mostly positive reviews from *The New York Times*, *Variety* and other major venues.)

*Tru Loved* opens with a witty sequence that introduces some of the characters via a sendup of 1950s *Leave It to Beaver*-type sitcoms. The main character is 16-year-old Tru (Najarra Townsend), who's just relocated with her two moms from tolerant San Francisco (where her two gay *dads* live) to intolerant Los Angeles suburb Agoura Hills. Not unexpectedly, Tru quickly encounters her new school's homophobia (internalized and otherwise) in the form of queer-baiting football player Manny and his equally ignorant coach, a queeny literature teacher who pretends he's not gay and closeted jock Lodell (Matthew Thompson). Lodell inducts her into his clique but has an ulterior motive: He is terrified of being discovered and needs a beard. Tru is too sweet to say no, despite the fact that it goes against all her beliefs.

Things get more complicated as the pressures of Lodell's closet increases, and the film hits the bull's-eye in scenes where he mortifies Tru by overacting the role of straight Romeo at her expense. Tru and a queen named Walter start a Gay Straight Alliance, Tru hooks up with a straight boy, and the plot twists—including a gay-bashing

sequence—continue up to the end.

*Tru Loved* is both a convincing message movie about living authentically and a diverting entertainment. Townsend is totally credible as Tru, while Thompson nails the difficult role of a well-intentioned, somewhat desperate boy whose secret takes its toll on others besides himself. Eagle-eyed viewers will spot *Star Trek*'s Nichelle Nichols as Lodell's sassy grandma, and real-life queer superstars David Kopay and Jane Lynch appear in cameos. Less effective are Tru's various parents, unable to make their underwritten roles seem real. Also questionable is the amount of music on the soundtrack, which sometimes overwhelms key scenes in bombast. Still, this is ultimately an earnest, affecting effort that deserves—and rewards—a viewing, preferably complete.

Opens Nov. 21 at Hollywood Theatre. **B+**

—Gary Morris

## Twilight

*Twilight* is here! And it's not very good! A thoroughly uninteresting cast of bloodlessly pretty, pale-skinned near-teens sleepwalks through a terrible script, lacking intensity, honesty, thrills or surprises. New superstar Robert Pattinson hasn't got the skills to depict immortal lust and make it believable, and possibly talented Kristen Stewart just seems to be on a high dose of cold medicine. A truly boring and yawn-inducing film, *Twilight* can only be recommended for fans (of which there are plenty), children or viewers for whom chaste, tell-don't-show romance trumps quality. **D**

—Jemiah Jefferson

## The World Unseen

Adapted with a surprisingly strong visual sensibility from her 2001 novel of the same name, director Shamim Sharif's *The World Unseen* focuses on a community seldom explored on film: Indians who lived in South Africa under British rule and apartheid. The film is set in 1952, when Indian wife and mother Miriam (Lisa Ray) is confused and exhilarated by the freedom of restaurateur Amina (Sheetal Sheth), another Indian woman. Amina defies the sexist strictures of Indian cus-



Two Indian women in 1950s South Africa fall in love against a background of pervasive racism in *The World Unseen*.

tom by remaining stubbornly single and not really bothering to hide her lesbianism; she also undercuts South Africa's racist laws by owning her cafe in name only and operating it equitably with an older black man, Jacob, as if he were a co-owner.

The women's mutual attraction is exponentially complicated by circumstance and sociopolitical environment. Miriam's husband cheats on her with impunity but expects her to be a dutiful, docile and faithful wife—a double standard that the film implies was common and expected by a married couple of their time, place and class. Slowly but surely, however, circumstances and emotions wear down Miriam's endemic conformity until she is able to take a small but sure step toward her own identity.

The love story between Miriam and Amina takes place against a background of pervasive police brutality and racism, and the film takes a good, hard look at a system that might grant certain privileges to one minority group (Indians) that it denies to another (blacks) in order to keep them divided and suspicious of each other. In addition, the film's parallel love story—a sweet autumn-years attraction between Jacob and a postmistress, an anti-segregationist white woman—is choked by the poisonous atmosphere of South African race relations in the 1950s.

Sheth is vibrant as sassy, liberated Amina, but Ray is particularly remarkable as a woman who is truly torn between familiar oppression and a freedom so unthinkable that it frightens her. The film's happy ending is graceful, absent of grandiosity or too much finality. It offers genuine reassurance, convincingly suggesting that one small individual action, while not a panacea, can be the difference between hope and despair.

Opens Nov. 21 at Living Room Theaters. **B**

—Christopher McQuain **10**

Auto, Home, Life, Health & Business

**epb&b** "Your Independent Insurance Agency"

insurance

Elliott, Powell, Baden & Baker, Inc.

**MARC BAKER**  
Downtown Portland  
(503) 227-1771 • www.epbb.com

wisdom  
compassion  
loving kindness

**DHARMA RAIN ZEN CENTER**  
2539 Southeast Madison, Portland, OR 97214  
503.239.4846 www.dharma-rain.org

**RAIN'S COMING!**  
PALM SPRINGS is calling!

Beautiful Desert Oasis

354 DAYS OF SUN • WINTER HI TEMPS 65-82  
GAY COMMUNITY IS 40% OF PALM SPRINGS' POPULATION  
DINAH SHORE LPGA WOMEN'S EXTRAVAGANZA  
WHITE PARTY - MEN'S ANNUAL BLOW OUT  
GOLF • TENNIS • SWIMMING • HIKING

Call **SUE FERGUSON, REALTOR**  
Your California Connection!  
503.789.5498 sue@sueferguson.net www.sueferguson.net

**MLS**  
**Windermere**

INCREDIBLE HOMES & CONDOS at INCREDIBLE PRICES!

**Coventry**  
Cycle Works

Recumbents  
Folding Bikes  
...and More!

Open Tuesday-Sunday  
(503) 230-7723  
2025 SE Hawthorne