



MIRAMAX FILMS, 2002

# City of God

## Fratricide in the Favela

**City of God:** Directed by Fernando Meirelles, with Katia Lund. Written by Braulio Mantovani. Based on the novel by Paulo Lins, 1996. Producers, Andrea Barala Ribeiro, Mauricio Andrade Ramos. Co-produced by Walter Salles. Cinematography, Cesar Charlone. Editor, Daniel Rezende. Art director, Tule Peake. Music, Antonio Pinto, Ed Cortes. Costumes, Bia Salgado, Ines Salgado. Starring Alexandre Rodrigues, Leandro Firmino da Hora, Matheus Nachtergaele, Seu Jorge, Phellipe Haagensen, Michel de Souza Gomes, Jonathan Haagensen and Douglas Silva. With Alice Braga and Roberta Rodriguez Silvia. Miramax Films, 2002. R. 135 minutes.

**A**s populous Rio de Janeiro sprawls, it settles into ghettos (called favelas) of crime and anarchy such as Cidade de Deus (City of God). Cynically named, this notorious housing project was built in the 1960s to house the inhabitants of Rio's slum cities on the hills. A dumping ground for the city's blacks, who make up its lowest social caste, the neighborhood

becomes a lawless frontier dominated by gun-toting adolescents and later, homeless children who run in gangs. This film chronicles what happens to two boys who grow up there: Rocket and Li'l Dice and the friends and enemies they make along the way to adulthood.

Rocket's narration helps the viewer through the multiplicity of stories and characters. He's just another 11-year-old boy (played by Luis Otavio) on the playground. But his brother is one of the Tender Trio, adolescent gangsters who pull off a big motel heist. Rocket resolves to never become a gangster. Li'l Dice (played by Douglas Silva), on the other hand, loves violence and wants more than anything to become the gangster everyone fears. He per-

sudes his brother, also one of the trio, to let him in the gang, and he comes up with the plan for the motel robbery, which goes terribly wrong.

Fast forward to the 1970s. Rocket (now played by Alexandre Rodrigues) works in a store, trying to save enough to buy a camera. Li'l Dice (now played by Leandro Firmino da Hora) and his best pal, Benny (Phellipe Haagensen), are petty criminals. But Li'l Dice likes to kill and sees that drug-dealing is the job of the future. It's a short step from there to killing off all the gang leaders except Carrot (Matheus Nachtergaele) and taking over the city's lucrative drug trade. The name change to Li'l Ze solidifies his unchallenged leadership.

Li'l Ze is an enforcer, and his first targets are ironically the very young street gangs who keep the neighborhood in an uproar and threaten the city dudes who come in to buy his cocaine. (This involves a very difficult scene to watch.) Meanwhile Rocket hangs with the Groovies, falls in love with a gorgeous girl, Angelica (Alice Braga), and smokes a lot of pot. Benny, Li'l Ze's childhood friend, changes to become a mellow pot-smoker. Benny gets Angelica to love him and dances with the Groovies. Things look up, but not for long.

This complicated story keeps unraveling, and at every step more and more people become corrupted by a system ruled by gun violence. Rocket shoots a few pictures and finds a dangerous career. Others are killed. Not always a coherent narrative, *City of God*

is always cinematically interesting. Thematically, it begs a comparison to Martin Scorsese's *Gangs of New York*.

For me, the big difference goes beyond the question of budgets large and small, actors well-known and unknown and verisimilitude. In both films, violence begets a never-ending cycle, with one generation of gun-slingers inspiring a new. The difference is one of scope and intention. Scorsese's *Gangs of New York* encompasses

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history on a larger scale. Metaphorically, it says, America's roots are found in sectarian and class violence, which is replaced by law (and institutional violence). Fernando Meirelles and Katia Lund's *City of God* shows the sociological result in a closed environs of governmental neglect, blatant racism and endemic poverty: violence and hopelessness.

Well worth seeing, if you can handle violence, *City of God* is now playing at the Bijou. Highly recommended. **EW**

# movie clips

**OPENING OR RETURNING:**  
**Adventures of Felix:** When he gets laid off from his job, HIV-positive Felix hits the road to Marseilles and meets interesting characters. Political subtext not overwhelmed by film's "feel-good realism." At 7 pm on 4/17 in 100 Willamette, UO campus. French Film Festival. \$3 student/\$4 general/\$15 & \$20 pass.  
**Anger Management:** Adam Sandler plays a man who must undergo anger management. His shrink, played by Jack Nicholson, moves in with him. Also stars Marisa Tomei. PG-13. Cinemark. Cinema World.  
**Bend It Like Beckham:** Soccer-crazy girls in London suburb drive their respective families crazy because they'd rather play soccer than think about marriage and shopping. Warm-hearted, generous film is likely to be a big hit. Get onboard early and enjoy! Highly recommended. PG-13. Bijou. **See review this issue.**  
**Beyond the Walls:** Uri Barbash's 1984 film about Israeli and Palestinian prisoners unite to beat the system. Top prize at Venice Film Festival '85. R. At 7 pm on 4/15 in 100 Willamette, UO campus. Middle East Film Festival. Sliding scale \$5-\$15 goes to support Grassroots International's peace work in Israel and Palestine.  
**Code Unknown:** Mickael Haneke's film illustrates his belief "that the very nature of perception is fragmentary." An episodic film that begins with an unintentional provocation and spreads like wildfire. Cast includes Juliette Binoche. Not rated. At 9 pm on 4/17 in 100 Willamette, UO campus. French Film Festival. \$3 student/\$4 general/\$15 & \$20 pass.  
**Dil Chahta Hai (Hindi):** 185 minutes. At 7:30 pm on 4/15 in 115 Pacific, UO campus. Free.  
**Gaza Strip:** James Longley shows life under occupation in this 74-minute, 2002 film. At noon on 4/12 at Bijou Arts Cinema. Middle East Film Festival. Sliding scale \$5-\$15 goes to support Grassroots International's peace work in Israel/Palestine.  
**House of a 1000 Corpses:** Think this might be a horror film? R. Cinemark.  
**Jungle Book 2:** Same song, second verse from Disney. Mowgli now lives in the man village, but he misses his friends and runs away to the jungle to find them. But he may be found first: by Shere Khan the tiger, his old jungle pals, or his new family. Voices include John Goodman, Haley Joel Osment and Phil Collins. G. Movies 12.  
**Kangaroo Jack:** Taking mob money to Australia, two New York doofuses loose it to a kangaroo. Stars Jerry O'Connell, Anthony Anderson, Christopher Walken and Dyan Cannon. David McNally directs. PG. Movies 12.  
**Monty Python and the Holy Grail (1975):** An assault by the British comedy gang on the Arthurian legend. Includes lots of manic mayhem and a never-before-seen 24 seconds from the "Castle Anthrax" scene. Directed by Terry Jones. LateNite Bijou.  
**Other Network, The:** Unaired and previously unseen pilots of four short works. **Heat-Vision & Jack** is directed by Ben Stiller and stars Jack Black and the voice of Owen Wilson as his sidekick, a talking motorcycle. **The Lewis Lectures** is an animated film about a woman and her dogs. **North Hollywood** follows several wannabes living on the fringe of H'wood. **Saturday TV Funhouse** "is a darkly demented kids sketch show" that's definitely not for kids. LateNite Bijou.  
**Platoon (1986):** Oliver Stone's Vietnam War picture is considered by some to be that war's most realistic film. Great performances from Willem Dafoe and Tom Berenger. Academy Awards '86 for director and best picture. R. At 7:15 pm on 4/16 in 115 Pacific, UO campus. Free.  
**When Cranes Fly (Letiat Zhurvali, 1957):** Mikhail Kalatozov directs this tale of wartime, when a woman whose lover has gone to fight and to "endure the unhappiness and grief of an unwanted seduction," she takes care of city's wounded. At 7:15 pm on 4/16 in 115 Pacific, UO campus. Free.  
**Films open the Friday following date of EW publication unless otherwise noted. See archived reviews at www.eugeneweekly.com.**

**CONTINUING:**  
**Agent Cody Banks:** Teen action adventure stars Frankie Muniz as an undercover CIA operative, Angie Harmon as his boss, and Hilary Duff as girlfriend. PG. Movies 12.  
**Basic:** War thriller stars Samuel L. Jackson as an elite commando officer who disappears on a mission and John Travolta as a rogue DEA agent. Also stars Connie Nielsen, Giovanni Ribisi, Taye Diggs; directed by John McTiernan. R. Cinemark.  
**Bringing Down the House:** Domestic comedy starring Steve Martin and Queen Latifah is directed by Adam Shankman. PG-13. Cinemark.  
**Catch Me If You Can:** Steven Spielberg directs Leonardo DiCaprio in tale of Frank Abagnale Jr., an actual '60s con man who passed himself off as a pilot, a doctor and a college professor and forged millions in checks before he was 21. Christopher Walken plays his father, and Tom Hanks is an F.B.I. agent. 2002 Academy Award noms for John Williams' music, Walken. Highly recommended. PG-13. Movies 12. **Online archives.**  
**Charly:** Mormon comedy, drama, romance based on a novel by Jack Weyland stars Heather Beers as Charly and Jeremy Elliot. PG. Movies 12.  
**Chicago:** Broadway spectacular directed by Rob Marshall stars Renee Zellweger and Catherine Zeta-Jones as killer dames behind bars who compete for tabloid coverage. With Queen Latifah, John C. Reilly and Richard Gere. 2002 Academy Awards for best picture, supporting actress Zeta-Jones, art direction, sound, editing and costumes. PG-13. Cinemark. Cinema World. **Online archives.**  
**City of God:** Rio de Janeiro is home to one of the most notorious slums in the world, called City of God. Based on true stories from the 'hood in Paulo Lins' novel. Fernando Meirelles and Katia Lund direct this acclaimed, unflinching film that stars primarily unknown first-time actors. Highly recommended if you can handle violence. R. Bijou. **See review this issue.**  
**Core, The:** Jon Amiel directs this adventure to the center of the earth. Scientists played by Aaron Eckhart, Hilary Swank and Bruce Greenwood journey deep into the earth to detonate a device to reactivate the planet's core. An unintentional comedy, it's a great break from reality. PG-13. Cinemark. **Online archives.**  
**Daredevil:** Marvel Comic's Man Without Fear is directed by Mark Steven Johnson. Stars Ben Affleck as the masked vigilante, Jennifer Graner, Michael Clarke Duncan, Colin Farrell, Joe Pantoliano, Jon Favreau and David Keith. PG-13. Movies 12.  
**Darkness Falls:** This horror thriller directed by Jonathan Liebesman is about the Tooth Fairy's revenge. One viewer wrote on the IMDB: "God, talk about wretched and boring..." PG-13. Movies 12.  
**Dreamcatcher:** Buddy reunion camping trip horror film from Lawrence Kasdan, based on Stephen King's book, stars Morgan Freeman, Donny Wahlberg, Damian Lewis, Timothy Olyphant, Jason Lee, Thomas Jane and Tom Sizemore. R. Cinemark.  
**Harry Potter: Chamber of Secrets:** Again directed by Chris Columbus, Harry (Daniel Radcliffe), Ron Weasley (Rupert Grint) and Hermione Granger (Emma Watson) try to uncover a dark force terrorizing Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. G. Movies 12. **Online archives.**  
**Head of State:** Chris Rock directs, co-writes and stars in this tale of a D.C. alderman who runs for the presidency. Also stars Bernie Mac, Dylan Baker, Robin Givens, James Rebhorn. PG-13. Cinema World. Cinemark.  
**Hot Chick:** Verbally abusive cheerleader wakes up in the body of Rob Schneider. Yikes! Directed by Tom Brady. PG-13. Movies 12.  
**Hunted, The:** Tommy Lee Jones plays a retired special-ops trainer and Benicio Del Toro is his former student, now an ace assassin gone bonkers. Directed by William Friedkin (*The Exorcist*). R. Cinemark.  
**Just Married:** This honeymoon from hell is directed by Shawn Levy and stars Ashton Kutcher, Brittany Murphy and Christian Kane. PG-13. Movies 12.  
**Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers:** Directed and re-imagined by Peter Jackson, part two of J.R.R. Tolkien's trilogy continues. New characters, a surprise return and great battles. Director Peter Jackson's

second masterpiece. Very highest recommendations. 2002 Academy Awards for sound editing, visual effects. PG-13. Cinemark. **Online archives.**  
**Man Apart, A:** If you've seen the trailer, you know that Vin Diesel is an undercover cop you don't want to mess with, especially after some sorry drug dealer scum breaks into his home. Violent revenge flick. R. Cinemark. Cinema World.  
**Phone Booth:** Colin Farrell, Kiefer Sutherland, Forest Whitaker, Katie Holmes and Radha Mitchell star in Joel Schumacher's thriller. R. Cinema World. Cinemark.  
**Pianist, The:** Winner of the Cannes Best Picture award, this critically acclaimed film is based on the life of Wladyslaw Szpilman, a Polish Jew, composer and pianist. When the Nazis invade, he finds salvation in his art. Directed, produced by Roman Polanski, it stars Adrien Brody as Szpilman. Highest recommendations. 2002 Academy Awards to Polanski, Brody and Ronald Harwood's adapted screenplay. R. Cinema World. Cinemark. **Online archives.**  
**Piglet's Big Movie:** Disney animated film features the whole Winnie-the-Pooh gang looking for Piglet, who has disappeared. Songs by Carly Simon. G. Cinemark.  
**Punch-Drunk Love:** Paul Thomas Anderson's comedy is about an LA businessman (Adam Sandler) who blindly follows a woman he loves (Emily Watson) to Hawaii. Also stars Luis Guzman and Philip Seymour Hoffman. Highly recommended for excellent performances. R. Movies 12. **Online archives.**  
**Rabbit-Proof Fence:** True 1931 story of three young kidnapped Australian Aboriginal girls who escape white control by making a 1,200 mile-trek home while pursued by authorities. Directed by Phillip Noyce, this courageous film stars Evelyn Sampi, David Gulpipli and Kenneth Branagh. It's a true walkabout with beautiful performances, empathic direction and dramatic cinematography by Christopher Doyle. Highest recommendations. PG. Bijou. **Online archives.**  
**Spirited Away:** Re-issue of 2002 Academy Award-winner for best animated feature. Latest film from legendary Japanese animation director Hayao Miyazaki (*Princess Mononoke*) follows adventures of 10-year old girl, Chihiro, who discovers a secret world and learns to take care of herself after her parents mysteriously change. Not just for kids, and too scary for preschoolers. Very highest recommendations. PG.

Cinema World. **Online archives.**  
**Twenty-fifth Hour:** Spike Lee's film tracks the regrets of a mid-level heroin dealer on his last day of freedom and explores the limits of friendship. Edward Norton has only 24 hours before he's due in prison for the next seven years. Also stars Rosario Dawson, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Barry Pepper, Anna Paquin and Brian Cox. Highly recommended for its realistic depiction of regret, which suffuses the film and raises it to a higher level. R. Movies 12. **Online archives.**  
**Two Weeks Notice:** Hugh Grant and Sandra Bullock star as a very, very rich man and his lawyer. When she quits, and he replaces her with Alicia Witt, she reconsiders. Written and directed by Marc Lawrence (*The Out-of-Towners*). PG-13. Movies 12.  
**View From the Top:** Bruno Barreto directs this 1960s era comedy about a girl's dream of becoming a first-class international flight attendant. Stars Gwyneth Paltrow, Christina Applegate, Mark Ruffalo and Candice Bergen. PG-13. Cinemark.  
**What a Girl Wants:** Teen Amanda Bynes is "trying to fit in, born to stand out." She wants a fairy tale relationship with her absent dad and is tired of living with her unconventional mom, played by Colin Firth and Kelly Preston. Oliver James plays her love interest. PG. Cinema World. Cinemark.  
**Wild Thornberrys, The:** Animated film about a girl who talks to and understands animals. She goes to Africa with her parents, nature filmmakers, and her best friend, a chimp. Voices include Lacy Chabert, Rupert Everett, Marisa Tomei, Tim Curry, Brenda Blethyn, Lynn Redgrave and Obba Babatundé. Directed by Jeff McGrath and Cathy Malkasian. 2002 Academy Award nomination for Paul Simon's original song. PG. Movies 12.

Bijou Art Cinemas (686-2458)  
 Cinema World 8 (342-6536)  
 Cinemark 17 (746-5202)  
 Movies 12 (741-1231)

# video clips

**New Releases on Video**  
 Releases subject to change. Available the Tuesday following date of EW publication, sometimes sooner. See archived movie reviews at [www.eugeneweekly.com](http://www.eugeneweekly.com)

**Absolute Beginners (1986):** Julien Temple's underrated camp musical set in 1950s Britain is based on Colin MacInnes's novel. Opening long tracking shot is memorable, as are street rumbles between rival Mods and Rockers. Stars Eddie O'Connell, Patsy Kensit, David Bowie, James Fox. Recommended. Now on DVD. PG.  
**Castle in the Sky (1986):** Hayao Miyazaki's early film now on two-disc DVD with English-language voices by James van der Beek, Anna Paquin, Cloris Leachman, Mandy Patinkin, Mark Hamill, Andy Dick. Also features original Japanese language track, trailers and storyboards. John Lasseter introduces and "Behind the Microphone" features voice talents.  
**Drumline:** Directed by Charles Stone, this tale of a talented street drummer from Harlem who goes to a college in the south, expecting to lead its marching band stars Nick Cannon, Zoe Saldana and Orlando Jones. DVD includes 10 deleted scenes, music videos. PG-13.  
**Kiki's Delivery Service:** Story about a teenaged witch and her black cat from Japanese animator Hayao Miyazaki was very big in

Japan. New-to-video release has been dubbed in English, with voices of Debbie Reynolds, Janane Garofalo, the late Phil Hartman and Kirsten Dunst. Two-disc DVD also features original Japanese language track, trailers and storyboards. John Lasseter, plus "Behind the Microphone" featurette. NR.  
**Lambada (1990):** Joel Silberg's dance craze movie stars Eddie Peck as a Beverly Hills High teacher who moonlights as a dirty dancer who teaches ghetto teens to shake it. PG.  
**Spirited Away:** 2002 Academy Award winner for best animated feature from legendary Japanese animation director Hayao Miyazaki (*Princess Mononoke*) follows adventures of 10-year old girl, Chihiro, who discovers a secret world and must take care of herself after her parents undergo a mysterious transformation. Newly dubbed by John Lasseter (*Toy Story*), this film is not just for kids. Critics are correctly calling it a masterpiece. DVD two-disc set has lots of extras. Very highest recommendations. PG.  
**Online archives.**

**Next week: Bloody Sunday, Mad About You, Once a Thief, Real Women Have Curves and Standing in the Shadow of Motown.**