

Thai Epic

Kings, Queens & Wars.

THE LEGEND OF SURIYOTHAI: Directed by Prince Chattri Chalerm Yukol. Produced by Kamla Yukol. Executive producers, Francis Ford Coppola, Kim Aubry. Written by Chalerm Yukol and Sunait Chutintaranond. Cinematographers, Igor Luther, Stanislav Dorsic, Anupap Boachen. Editors, Chattri Chalerm Yukol, Pattamanadda Yukol. Music, Richard Harvey. Art direction, Prasopkok Thanasetvirai, Prasert Posrirat, Chetsada Prunarakard. Starring M.L. Piyapas Bhimbhakdi as Suriyothai, Chatchai Plengpanich as Piren, Sarunyoo Wongkrchang as Prince Thien, Johnny Anfone as Warawonga, and Mai Charoenpura as Srisudachan. Francis Ford Coppola Presents. Sony Pictures Classics, 2003. R. 142 minutes.

Here is a heavy-duty dose of 16th century Thai history, complete with armies that clash by day and night, on land and sea, in mountains, forests, villages and castles. It's also a tale of royalty, intrigue, murder and political assassinations. Reminiscent of the court intrigues of that time in England and other European countries Shakespeare wrote about, the concept is not foreign. But the film's lack of a narrative arc with clear-cut conflicts, well developed characters and the possibility of change creates obstacles for ordinary viewers.

The characters include the story's heroine, Suriyothai, who since childhood has loved a warrior named Piren but marries Prince Thien of the royal family. Her opposite is Srisudachan, a devil-woman, the "Siamese Lady Macbeth," as A.O. Scott (*The New York Times*) dubs her.



Srisudachan has never met a woman, child or man she wouldn't murder or torture to save her own skin. But like the other characters, she remains largely iconic and untouchable.

The settings are stunning, the costumes are beautiful, the cinematography is gorgeous, but the storyline is chock-full of portentous events that smother any personal story. The characters cannot develop depth, and they become no more than chess pieces on a board. Among them,

only the loyal Warawonga evokes sympathy.

The film's director, Chattri Chalerm Yukol, is a Thai prince, who attended film school with Francis Ford Coppola, and whose patron is Queen Sirikit, who wanted Thai history on film for her people. Yukol brought Coppola on board to find the story within his original eight-hour film.

I can imagine the film satisfying Thai people living far from their own culture,

...the storyline is chock-full of **portentous** events that smother any personal story. The characters **cannot develop** depth, and they become no more than **chess pieces** on a board.

and Asian scholars may find Yukol's history of interest. Despite English-language, on-screen explanations and dialogue captions, it is difficult to track events and follow individual characters with any degree of certainty. The absence of a coherent dramatic structure and well delineated characters rob the film of appeal to the average filmgoer.

The Legend of Suriyothai opens at the Bijou Friday, Sept. 19. **EW**

movie clips

OPENING OR RETURNING:

Anything Else: Although Woody Allen wrote, directed and starred in this Gen X romantic comedy with Jason Biggs and Christina Ricci, the publicity for the film hardly notes that fact. When Biggs's romance with Ricci falters, he consults Allen. Also stars Stockard Channing, Danny DeVito and Jimmy Fallon. R. Cinema World. Cinemark.

Cold Creek Manor: Sharon Stone and Dennis Quaid star in Mike Figgis' horror flick about city folk who find a repossessed mansion in the country that the owner (Stephen Dorff) really wants back. Also stars Juliette Lewis and Christopher Plummer. R. Cinemark. Cinema World.

Creature from the Black Lagoon: In 3-D! The 1954 classic monster film mixes scientific discovery with legend. New print, complete with 3-D glasses tuned to bring out its best. Two weeks only; special event prices. Bijou.

Fighting Temptations, The: Cuba Gooding Jr. plays an ad exec who inherits money only if he conducts a rural gospel choir. Co-stars Beyoncé Knowles. Musical comedy directed by Jonathan Lynn. PG-13. Cinemark.

Legend of Suriyothai, The: Historical epic set in 16th century Thailand is cinematically stunning, with gorgeous people, costumes, exotic animals and a fair share of bloody-mindedness. War, court intrigue, murder, betrayal. R. Bijou. **See review this issue.**

Roundup, The: Peter Berg directs Seann William Scott, The Rock, Rosario Dawson and Christopher Walken in this adventure about a kingpin's son who disappears in the Amazon in search of a valuable artifact. PG-13. Sneak at 7:20 pm on 9/20. Cinemark.

Secondhand Lions: Haley Joel Osment is sent to his great uncles' rural Texas farm, where the city boy has much to learn. Robert Duvall and Michael Caine may have been bank robbers. Written and directed by Tim McCanlies (writer, *The Iron Giant*). PG. Cinemark. Cinema World.

Terminator 3 Rise of the Machines: Jonathan Mostow directs, and Arnold Schwarzenegger comes back to save the world from annihilation once again. John Connor (Nick Stahl), is 18 now, and he's fighting off a female killer cyborg from the future, (Kristanna Loken). R. Cinemark. **Online archives.**

Underworld: Set in a world where vampires are a clan of aristocratic moderns, and lycans (werewolves) are a gang of street thugs, Len Wiseman's film stars Kate Beckinsale and Scott Speedman. When they fall in love, they trigger an ancient feud. R. Cinema World. Cinemark.

Films open the Friday following date of EW publication unless otherwise noted. See archived reviews at www.eugeneweekly.com.

CONTINUING:

American Wedding: Jim (Jason Biggs) and Michelle (Alyson Hannigan) are getting married. Now if their friends and family will just stay on their best behavior. Right. American Pie's crude humor lives on. Also stars January Jones, Fred Willard, Eugene Levy, Thomas Ian Nicholas, Seann William Scott and Eddie Kaye Thomas. R. Movies 12.

Bruce Almighty: Jim Carrey, Morgan Freeman and Jennifer Aniston star in this tale of a TV reporter, who has a really bad day, rages against God and receives more than he expected. PG-13. Movies 12.

Cabin Fever: Four college friends vacation at a remote cabin, but one of them gets very sick, and the others struggle with life and death decisions as their terror rises. Directed by Eli Roth; stars Jordan Ladd, Rider Strong, James DeBello, Cerina Vincent, Joey Kern, Arie Verveen. R. Cinema World. Cinemark.

Charlie's Angels Full Throttle: McG again directs the angels - Cameron Diaz, Drew Barrymore, Lucy Liu, and ex-angel Demi Moore - to save the government's witness protection program, from which classified info has been stolen. Written by John August. PG-13. Movies 12. **Online archives.**

Daddy Day Care: Eddie Murphy and Jeff Garlin lose their jobs and can't afford day care for their sons, so they open their own facility. Comedy directed by Steve Carr also stars Anjelica Huston, Steve Zahn and Regina King. PG. Movies 12.

Dickie Roberts: Former Child Star: Sam Weisman directs David Spade in his role as a 35-year old out of work actor who hires a family so he can relive his childhood and finally grow up. With Mary McCormack, Jon Lovitz, Craig Berko, Rob Reiner. PG-13. Cinemark.

Dirty Pretty Things: Stephen Frears directs Audrey Tautou and Chiwetel

Ejiofor as immigrants in London who work at the same West London hotel, a secret underworld of illegal activity. Thriller. Excellent performances and a weird beauty. Highly recommended. R. Bijou. **Online archives.**

Finding Nemo: Pixar's computer-animated fantasy of two Clownfish, Marlin and his son Nemo, who get separated in the Great Barrier Reef. Written and directed by Andrew Stanton (*A Bug's Life*), with voices by Albert Brooks, Ellen DeGeneres, Willem Dafoe, Geoffrey Rush, Allison Janney. Very highly recommended. G. Cinemark. **Online archives.**

Freaky Friday: Jamie Lee Curtis and Lindsay Lohan play a quarrelling mother and daughter who accidentally switch bodies. Ooops! Mark Harmon plays the mom's fiancé. Directed by Mark Waters, based on Mary Rodgers' book. Cinemark. **Online archives.**

Freddy vs. Jason: The ultimate celebrity death match: Freddy Kruger (Robert Englund) takes on Jason "The Face Mask" Voorhees (Ken Kerzinger), in this film directed by Ronny Yu. R. Movies 12.

Hollywood Homicide: Fast-paced action comedy directed by Ron Shelton stars Harrison Ford and Josh Hartnett as cops, with Isaiah Washington, Lena Olin, Bruce Greenwood, Master P., Lolita Davidovich, Dwight Yoakum, Keith David and Martin Landau. PG-13. Movies 12. **Online archives.**

Italian Job, The: Back in town again. Mark Wahlberg leads a heist that's

double-crossed by one of his crew. Charlize Theron plays a safecracker in this cool revenge movie. Also stars Edward Norton, Mos Def and Donald Sutherland. Highly recommended for its pure entertainment value. PG-13. Movies 12. **Online archives.**

League of Extraordinary Gentlemen: Based on the comic book miniseries by Alan Moore, directed by Steve Norrington, the movie stars Sean Connery, Peta Wilson, Shane West, Stuart Townsend, Naseeruddin Shah, and Tony Curran. PG-13. Movies 12.

Matchstick Men: Ridley Scott directs this tale of a couple of grifters working small-time cons, until personal issues arise. Stars Nicolas Cage, Sam Rockwell, with Alison Lohman and Bruce McGill. PG-13. Cinemark. Cinema World. **See review this issue.**

Matrix Reloaded: Second chapter brings Neo (Keanu Reeve), Trinity (Laurence Fishburne) and Trinity (Carrie-Anne Moss) closer to solving the enigma but also puts them in greater danger. Written and directed by Andy and Larry Wachowski, it also stars Hugo Weaving, Jada Pinkett Smith and Gloria Foster. R. Movies 12. **Online archives.**

Once Upon a Time in Mexico: Directed by Robert Rodriguez. Antonio Banderas as El Mariachi, now involved in international espionage. Costars Salma Hayek, Johnny Depp and Mickey Rourke. R. Cinema World. Cinemark.

Open Range: Kevin Costner directs

and stars with Robert Duvall in this traditional Western. A corrupt cattle baron (Michael Gambon) forces the cowboys to take up arms. Also stars Annette Bening, whose restrained performance is warm and real; Abraham Benrubi, Diego Luna. Recommended. Cinemark **Online archives.**

Pirates of the Caribbean: Non-stop adventure directed by Gore Verbinski stars Johnny Depp, Geoffrey Rush, Orlando Bloom and Keira Knightley. Depp sashays, Rush disassembles, Bloom fences and Knightley swash-buckles. Depp and Rush's over the top performances are great. Recommended. PG-13. Cinemark. Cinema World. **Online archives.**

S.W.A.T. Police Special Weapons and Tactics unit buddies Samuel L. Jackson and Colin Farrell star in this action-thriller based on the 1970s TV series. Also with Michelle Rodriguez, LL Cool J. PG-13. Cinemark.

Seabiscuit: A has-been racehorse becomes America's Depression-era success story. Seabiscuit gets support from jockey Tobey Maguire, trainer Chris Cooper, and owner Jeff Bridges. Written, directed by Gary Ross based on Laura Hillenbrand's best-selling non-fiction book, it also stars Elizabeth Banks, William H. Macy. Highest recommendations. PG-13. Cinemark. **Online archives.**

Sinbad: Legend of the Seven Seas: DreamWorks animated pirate adventure tale stars the voice of Brad Pitt as Sinbad, Catherine Zeta-Jones as Marina, and Michelle Pfeiffer as the

goddess of chaos. Joe Fiennes plays Proteus, a rival pirate. Directed by Tim Johnson and Patrick Gilmore. PG. Movies 12.

Twenty-eight Days Later: Danny Boyle (*Trainspotting*) directs scary horror film set in a post-cataclysmic future, where a deadly virus sweeps through earth's population, leaving people in a chronic state of killer rage. Stars Christopher Eccleston, Cillian Murphy, Naomie Harris, Megan Burns and Brendan Gleeson. New possible ending. R. Movies 12.

Uptown Girls: Brittany Murphy stars as the freewheeling daughter of a late rock legend, but when her inheritance is stolen, she's forced to get a job as a nanny to precocious Ray Schleine (Dakota Fanning), an "eight-year-old going on forty." In a comedic battle of wills, each discovers in the other a true friend. Directed by Boas Yakin. Also stars Heather Locklear. PG-13. Movies 12.

Winged Migration: Documentary directed by Jacques Perrin shows many bird species making round trip migrations of up to 10,000 miles up close. Ingenious ultralight aircraft let movie's 13 cinematographers fly right next to, in front of or below the birds they were filming. A moving film. Highest recommendations. Bijou. **Online archives.**

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

Bombay Talkie (1970): Early James Ivory film released in a new digital transfer, wide screen version, the DVD includes interviews a documentary about legendary Bollywood dancer known as, *Helen, Queen of the Nautch Girls*; interviews.

Daddy Day Care: Eddie Murphy and Jeff Garlin lose their jobs and can't afford day care for their sons, so they open their own facility. Comedy directed by Steve Carr also stars Anjelica Huston, Steve Zahn and Regina King. PG..

Dancer Upstairs, The: John Malkovich's directorial debut based on the book written by Nicholas Shakespeare is a love story set in a Latin American capital in the middle of a massive manhunt for a terrorist named Ezequiel. Javier Bardem stars as a police detective who falls in love with his daughter's dance teacher, played by Laura Morante. The Maoist terrorist is based on the leader of Peru's Shining Path guerrillas, Abimael Guzman. Serious film, excellent performances. R. Very highly recommended. **Online archives.**

Heat and Dust (1983): Another excellent film from the James Ivory canon, this stars Julie Christie, Greta Scacchi, Shashi Kapoor, Madhur Jaffrey. The DVD includes a 55-minute film about Royal India, Autobiography of a Princess; and

interviews with the filmmakers.

Holes: Adventures digging holes at Camp Green Lake for Stanley, who comes from a strange family that's been cursed for generations. Embarrassingly, Jon Voight, Sigourney Weaver and Tim Blake Nelson co-star, but the kids are great. Highly recommended. PG. Movies 12. **Online archives.**

Mighty Wind, A: Christopher Guest's (*Best in Show*) pseudo-documentary narrative about a folk music reunion show is one of his craftiest satirical offerings. Stars the usual suspects: Eugene Levy, Parker Posey, Bob Balaban. Harry Shearer, Michael McKean and Guest himself. Highly recommended. PG-13. **Online archives.**

Shogun: Five-disc set of James Clavell's novel turned original TV miniseries starring Richard Chamberlain, Toshiro Mifune was a big hit. DVD extras include 79-minuted documentary; three features on the samurai, tea ceremony and the geisha; commentary.

TwentyFour (24): Season Two: All episodes from last year's season of this thrilling and unique television program as well as extras.

NEXT WEEK: The Adventures of Robin Hood (1938), Dreamcatchers, Fargo Special Edition, The Kids Are All Right (1979), Nowhere in Africa, The Treasure of the Sierra Madre (1948), Two Fast, 2 Furious and Yankee Doodle Dandy (1942).