

Overcoming Gravity

Comic, dramatic masterpiece

ANGELS IN AMERICA (HBO): Directed by Mike Nichols. Written by Tony Kushner from his original stage play. Produced by Celia D. Costas. Executive producers, Cary Brokaw, Michael Haley, Mike Nichols. Associate producer, Paul A. Levin. Original music, Thomas Newman. Cinematography, Stephen Goldblatt. Film editing, John Bloom, Antonia Van Drimmelen. Production design, Stuart Wurtzel. Art direction, John Kasarda. Set decoration, George DeTitta Jr. Costumes, Ann Roth. Starring Meryl Streep (the Rabbi; Ethel Rosenberg; Hannah Pitt), Al Pacino (Roy Cohn), Emma Thompson (nurse Emily; homeless woman; the Angel), Justin Kirk (Prior Walter), Mary-Louise Parker (Harper Pitt), Jeffrey Wright (Mr. Lies; Belize), Ben Shankman (Louis Ironson), Patrick Wilson (Joe Pitt), James Cromwell (Henry). Home Box Office Films, 2003. 370 minutes. NR.

Tony Kushner's two award-winning plays — jointly called *Angels in America* — are *Millennium Approaches* (1993-94; '93 Pulitzer Prize, Tony Award) and *Perestroika* (1993-94; Tony Award). Set during the AIDS epidemic in the indifferent mid-'80s of Ronald Reagan's America, the plays involve a few central characters whose lives and interests intersect in believable ways. Some actors (see above) play more than one character. And one character, Roy Cohn, is an actual historical figure associated with the now-discredited red-baiting tactics of Sen. Joe McCarthy and the Rosenberg trials of the early Cold War years.

Mike Nichol and Tony Kushner's \$60 million film adaptation of the plays begins when Louis (Ben Shankman) abandons his longtime lover Prior Walter (Justin Kirk) just as Prior discovers he has full-blown AIDS. Louis agonizes over his betrayal of Prior, seeks religious advice from a Rabbi (Meryl Streep), but enjoys his freedom and meets a new man.

Mormons Harper (Mary-Louise Parker) and Joe Pitt (Patrick Wilson) have recently relocated to New York from Utah. Attorney Joe clerks for a judge and confers with his mentor, the infamous conservative lawyer Roy Cohn. Harper senses something wrong in her marriage and self-medicates into bizarre hallucinations to blot out the pain. In one juicy vision, Harper finds herself in Antarctica with Mr. Lies (Jeffrey Wright, who appeared in the Broadway stage production).

The plot thickens when Cohn (Al Pacino) insists on calling his illness "liver cancer," even though his doctor, Henry (James Cromwell), tells him it's AIDS. The pugnacious Cohn also tangles verbally with a tart-tongued nurse, Belize (Jeffrey Wright).

Belize supports Prior after Louis leaves, but nothing prepares Prior when an Angel (Emma Thompson) terrifies him one night, crashing through the ceiling, demanding sexual favors and insisting that Prior is the Prophet she and the other angels have been seeking.

Mormon widow Hannah Pitt (Meryl Streep) comes to New York after a disturbing late-night phone call from her son, Joe, who has met Louis and is reluctantly attracted to him.

And so it goes. Over the six hours and 10 minutes of the two plays, many characters connect. The subjects are weighty — AIDS, denial, God's absence, fidelity, faith — but the dialogue delights. Entertaining and witty, these characters show us many sides of their personalities. And underneath the outstand-



ABOVE: ROY COHN (AL PACINO) AND ETHEL ROSENBERG (MERYL STREEP). BELOW, COUNTER CLOCKWISE: HARPER (MARY-LOUISE PARKER), BELIZE (JEFFREY WRIGHT), LOUIS (BEN SHANKMAN), HANNAH (STREEP), PRIOR WALTER (JUSTIN KIRK), ANGEL (EMMA THOMPSON).



RON PHILLIPS; HBO FILMS

ing stagecraft, rich language, peerless direction and brilliant performances strong, serious issues are being aired. It's as close to perfect as cable television ever comes and is surely one of the superlative film events of 2003.

I saw the plays performed by the national touring company on two consecutive Sundays in Portland a few years ago and was

blown away. Don't let your opportunity to see this very American theatrical work pass because you think in advance you won't like a gay drama. This play transcends categories and defies labels. It's about us. All of us.

Sorry, *Angels* can only be seen on cable HBO at the moment, but eventually it will be more widely available. Very highest recommendations. **EW**

movie clips

OPENING OR RETURNING:

Big Fish: Tim Burton's film about a son (Billy Crudup) who tries to figure out his father's (Albert Finney) life through the wild stories he's told. Also stars Ewan McGregor, Helena Bonham Carter, Danny DeVito, Jessica Lange, Alison Lohman and Steve Buscemi..PG-13. Cinema World. Cinemark.

Chasing Liberty: In this young adult romantic comedy, Mandy Moore plays the only child of the US Prez, and Matthew Goode is the Brit she meets in Europe who helps her escape from her Secret Service agents. PG-13. Cinemark. Cinema World

Jazzmen (1983): Karen Shakhnazarova directs film about a young man who forms a street jazz band that finds recognition. In Russian with English subtitles. Free. At 8:15 on 01/12 in 115 Pacific.

Man Who Shot Liberty Valance. The (1962): Acclaimed John Ford film stars John Wayne, James Stewart, Edmund O'Brien, Lee Marvin and a host of great character actors. Classic Western. Activities start at 6 pm on 01/10 at the Lorane Grange. \$7 donation.

My Baby's Daddy: Three friends from the hood discover their girlfriends are all pregnant at the same time. Now they have to grow up to become daddies. PG-13. Cinemark.

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

Bad Santa: Directed by Terry Zwigoff. The story of two con men who go on a road trip to malls dressed as Santa and his elf who rob the malls after hours. An 8-year-old teaches them the true meaning of Christmas. Right! Stars Billy Bob Thornton, Bernie Mac, Lauren Graham, John Ritter. R. Cinemark.

Brother Bear: Disney tale of young man who is transformed into a bear and his adventures in the great Northwest. He picks up a bear cub and runs into a pair of misguided moose, or is that meese? Six new songs from Phil Collins,

including one with Tina Turner. G. Movies 12.

Calendar Girls: Spunky members of a woman's club in Yorkshire, England poses naked to raise money for medical research after one's husband gets leukemia. Stars Helen Mirren, Julie Walters and John Alderton. Based on a true story. Nigel Cole directs .PG-13 Cinemark.

Cat in the Hat, The: Mike Meyers stars as the outrageous feline who visits a couple of kids and wreaks havoc in the house while mom's away. With Alec Baldwin, Kelly Preston. Reviewers don't recommend. PG-13. Movies 12.

Cheaper by the Dozen: Steve Martin and Bonnie Hunt play the parents of 12 children, including Piper Perabo, Hilary Duff and Tom Welling. Directed by Shawn Levy. PG. Cinema World. Cinemark.

Cold Mountain: Anthony Minghella's adaptation of Charles Frazier's Civil War best-seller stars Jude Law as a wounded Southern soldier walking home across the mountains, Nicole Kidman as his pre-war sweetheart, and Renee Zellweger as a young drifter who teaches her to farm and survive. Elegaic. Excellent performances, beautiful film. Very highest recommendations. R. Cinema World. Cinemark. **See review this issue.**

Elf: Jon Favreau directs and Will Farrell stars as an elf who doesn't look like the other kids, er, elves. The big elf searches for his biological father (James Caan) in New York.PG. Movies 12.

Freaky Friday: Jamie Lee Curtis, Lindsay Lohan play a quarreling mother and daughter who accidentally switch bodies. Oops! Mark Harmon plays the mom's fiancé. Directed by Mark Waters. Highly recommended. PG. Movies 12.

Online archives. **Haunted Mansion:** Eddie Murphy stars in Rob Minkoff's (*Stuart Little*) ghost comedy, with Jennifer Tilly, Don Knotts, Terence Stamp PG. Cinemark.

Honey: Directed by Bille Woodruff. Stars Jessica Alba, Li'l Romeo and Mekhi Phifer. Honey (Alba) is a sexy, tough music video choreographer who

shakes up her life after her mentor gives an ultimatum: Sleep with him or be blacklisted within the industry. PG-13. Movies 12.

In America: Jim Sheridan's memoir of living in New York in 1981 with his wife and two daughters is a heartfelt film that stars Samantha Morton, Paddy Considine, Sarah Bolger and Emma Bolger. Highest recommendations. PG-13. Bijou. **Online archives.**

Last Samurai: Edward Zwick directs. In Japan, US Civil War hero Nathan Algren (Tom Cruise) trains the Emperor's troops in the way of the gun as they take on the last samurais. Algren is captured by Katsumoto (Ken Watanabe) and falls under samurai traditions and codes of honor. R. Cinemark.

Lord of the Rings: Return of the King: Peter Jackson completes Tolkien's trilogy on film, and the result is stunning. Stars Elijah Wood, Viggo Mortensen, Sean Astin, Ian McKellen, Billy Boyd, Orlando Bloom, Liv Ullmann, Cate Blanchett. In parallel stories Frodo and Sam make it to Mount Doom as the warriors of Middle Earth under the leadership of Aragorn (Viggo Mortensen) fight the final battle against the forces of the evil Sauron. Very highest recommendations. Brilliant! Cinema World. Cinemark. **Online archives.**

Looney Tunes: Mixed animation/ live action directed by Joe Dante, stars Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Brendan Fraser, Jenna Elfman, Steve Martin, Timothy Dalton, Joan Cusack, Heather Locklear. PG. Movies 12.

Love Actually: Written and directed by Richard Curtis (*Bridget Jones's Diary*), this romantic comedy stars Hugh Grant, Liam Neeson, Colin Firth, Laura Linney, Alan Rickman, Emma Thompson, Keira Knightley, Martine McCutcheon, Bill Nighy. Good fun. Highly recommended. R. Movies 12.

Master and Commander The Far side of the World: Peter Weir brings the late Patrick O'Brian's best-selling nautical adventures to the screen with Russell Crowe as Captain Jack Aubrey and Paul Bettany as Dr. Stephen Maturin, ship surgeon and naturalist. Set during the

Napoleonic Wars. Highest recommendations. PG-13. Cinemark. **Online archives.**

Mona Lisa Smile: Julia Roberts is an idealistic teacher and nonconformist at Wellesley in the 1950s. Julia Stiles, Kirsten Dunst and Maggie Gyllenhaal are her students. Mike Newell directs. PG-13. Cinemark. Cinema World.

Paycheck: Based on a Philip K. Dick sci-fi short story and directed by John Woo, film stars Ben Affleck, Uma Thurman Aaron Eckhart, Paul Giamatti, Colm Feore, Michael C. Hall. PG-13. Cinemark.

Peter Pan: Directed by P.J. Hogan, movie stars Jason Isaacs, Jeremy Sumpter, Richard Briers, Olivia Williams, Lyn Redgrave, Ludivine Sagnier and Rachel Hurd-Wood. PG. Cinema World. Cinemark.

Radio: High school football coach (Ed Harris) shocks a Southern town by taking on a mentally challenged youth (Cuba Gooding Jr.) and developing a decades-long friendship with him. Also stars Alfre Woddard and Debra Winger; directed by Mike Tollin. PG. Movies 12.

Scary Movie 3: Horror spoof satirizes movies such as *The Ring*, *Signs*, *The Matrix Reloaded*, *Eight Mile*. Stars Anna Faris, Charlie Sheen, Denise Richards,

Eddie Griffin and Queen Latifah. Directed by David Zucker. R. Movies 12.

School of Rock: Faking it as a substitute teacher, wild guitarist Jack Black turns elementary musical prodigies into a high-voltage rock band. Directed by Richard Linklater, it also stars Joan Cusack, Mike White and Sarah Silverman. PG-13. Movies 12.

Something's Gotta Give: Directed by Nancy Meyers. Harry Sanborn (Jack Nicholson) is a New York music mogul with a libido much younger than his years. Also stars Diane Keaton, Amanda Peet and Keanu Reeves. PG-13. Cinema World. Cinemark. **Online archives.**

Stuck on You: The Farrelly Brothers (*Something About Mary*) direct this story of joined twins Bob (Mat Damon) and Walt (Greg Kinear). Walt convinces Bob to move to L.A. so he can become an actor. But success threatens to drive them apart. Also stars Cher, Eva Mendes and Seymour Cassel plus big name cameos. PG-13. Movies 12.

Twenty-one Grams: Mexican director Alejandro González Iñárritu's second feature has astounded critics. Telling three linked stories, Iñárritu again works

magic with narrative structure. Sean Penn, Benicio Del Toro and Naomi Watts, star in a film *The New York Times* says reaches a "Faulknerian idea of old-fashioned grace." Also stars Charlotte Gainsbourg, Clea DuVall, Danny Huston and Melissa Leo. R. Bijou. **Online archives.**

Under the Tuscan Sun: Diane Lane plays writer Frances Mayes in this screen adaptation of her best selling book about buying a run-down villa in Italy and creating a new life. Escape from real life — beautiful people, gorgeous scenery, everybody's got money. PG-13. Movies 12. **Online archives.**

Underworld: Brought back for Halloween. 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. Movies 12..

Bijou Art Cinemas (686-2458)
Cinema World 8 (342-6536)
Cinemark 17 (746-5202)c
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

Buffalo Soldiers (2003): Joaquin Phoenix, Ed Harris, Scott Glenn and Anna Paquin star in this pretty negative picture of American military based in Germany in 1989, directed by Australian Gregor Jordan. Release postponed after 9/11/01. R.

Daddy and Them (2003): Long-delayed film stars Billy Bob Thornton (who also directs), Laura Dern, Kelly Preston, Ben Affleck, Jamie Lee Curtis.

Out of Order (2003): Eric Stoltz, Felicity Huffman, Kim Dickens, William H. Macy, Peter Bogdanovich and Justine Bateman star in this movie made for cable Showtime. NR.

Strawberry and Chocolate (Cuba,1993): A socially repressive Cuba is the setting for the story of an older gay man who falls for a younger straight man. No rating, in Spanish with English subtitles. Highly regarded film that played the Bijou.

Swimming Pool: Charlotte Rampling plays a famous British mystery writer, and Ludivine Sagnier plays a sexually precocious teen in Francois Ozon's suspense drama set in the South of France. Beautiful, moody piece. R. **Online archives.**

Next week: The Accidental Tourist (1988), Bill Maher (2003), Cabin Fever, Chump Change (2002), Everybody's All American (1988), Once Upon a Time in Mexico, Open Range, Rules of the Game (1939), Spellbound (2003) and Swing Shift (1984).